Erroneous radiation spread projections made by industry-linked firm

The Associated Press

TOKYO, Nov. 21 (Kyodo) — Erroneous projections for the spread of radiation from reactors in Japan in the event of a severe accident were made by a consulting firm linked to the nuclear industry for the nation's independent nuclear regulatory body, sources familiar with the matter said Wednesday.

The revelation calls into question the ability of the Nuclear Regulation Authority as a watchdog, as it outsourced the projection work to the consulting company through the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization that originally contracted the project and merely released the forecasts.

The projections were created by CSA of Japan Co. According to a credit research company, CSAJ is a member of the Japan Atomic Industrial Forum nuclear industry body and has business transactions with the JNES and a subsidiary of Tohoku Electric Power Co.

The radiation spread projection work was outsourced to the consulting firm for 9.77 million yen by the JNES, which contracted the project from the predecessor of the NRA in March, the sources said.

The predecessor Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency set the deadline for the projection work at the end of May, but that was delayed until shortly before Oct. 24, when the NRA released its first projections for the spread of radiation from reactors in the case of a severe accident like the one at the Fukushima Daiichi complex last year.

The JNES said it subcontracted the project to CSAJ due to the lack of manpower. But the sources said that claim is doubtful as only one worker of the consulting firm was tasked with entering data into a simulation program created by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the sources said.

The data used for the forecasts including wind directions were provided by utilities that operate nuclear plants, they said. That indicates the simulation work depended on the nuclear industry.

NRA spokesman Hideka Morimoto has apologized for errors in the projections that were aimed at providing references for local governments near nuclear plants to expand areas that should be subject to special preparations against nuclear disasters.

Morimoto said the blame lies with the NRA secretariat and the JNES, because they

relied on utilities to secure firsthand information and did not have sufficient checking functions on their own. The NRA has instructed the JNES to review all the data for the projections.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/12/2013 - 5:16pm*):
http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2012/11/erroneous-radiation-spread-projections-made-industry-linked-firm?qt-recent_content=0