

## **Panel views faults at Tohoku Electric nuclear plant as active**

The Associated Press

TOKYO, Feb. 18 (Kyodo) — A panel under Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority said in a draft report Monday that significant segments of the major geological faults running under Tohoku Electric Power Co.'s atomic power plant site in Aomori Prefecture are likely to be active.

The faults in question are not seen as running directly beneath the sole reactor at the Higashidori complex, but the assessment suggests that the reactor may have to remain offline for quite a while as the utility will need to reassess the plant's quake resistance and take measures to reinforce the facilities.

The draft report, which was a summary of discussions that have taken place among the panel members, also touched on the need to further study other smaller faults that run underneath an area close to the reactor building.

In quake-prone Japan, plant operators are not allowed to build nuclear reactors and related facilities important for safe reactor operation directly above active faults.

Officials of Tohoku Electric, who also attended the discussions, said that the company will conduct additional geological surveys, taking into account the opinions it has received from the members of the panel.

But the utility maintained its argument that there are no active faults at the plant's premises. Executive Vice President Takeo Umeda told a press conference later in the day that one of the major purposes of the surveys is to "properly explain that there are no activities" in the faults.

The utility plans to compile the outcome of the surveys in December.

The panel plans to finalize the draft report after listening to the opinions of other experts that are asked by the NRA to cooperate in the investigation of faults at other nuclear power plants.

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