

## IAEA: Japan nuclear regulation should improve skills, law

January 22 2016, by Mari Yamaguchi

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Philippe Jamet, left, commissioner of France Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) and Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission team leader and Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority Chairman Shunichi Tanaka shake hands after a press conference in Tokyo, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency says Japan's nuclear safety regulation has improved since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but it still needs to strengthen inspections and staff competency. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Japan has improved its nuclear safety regulation since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but it still needs to strengthen inspections and staff competency, a team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency said Friday.

It was the first IAEA review for Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority since it was established in 2012. Japan adopted stricter safety requirements for plant operators, but a law regulating on-site inspections remained mostly unchanged.

The 17-member team, which concluded a 12-day inspection that included the wrecked Fukushima plant, said the Nuclear Regulation Authority demonstrated independence and transparency—crucial elements lacking before the disaster, when an earlier agency was in charge.

The Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant was hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, triggering triple meltdowns. Government, parliamentary and private investigations have blamed complacency about safety, inadequate crisis management skills, a failure to keep up with international safety standards, and collusion between regulators and the nuclear industry.

The IAEA inspection team urged the Nuclear Regulation Authority to enhance inspection competence and the government to amend its nuclear safety law to make on-site safety checks more effective and flexible.



Philippe Jamet, left, commissioner of France Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) and Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission team leader and Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority Chairman Shunichi Tanaka attend a press conference in Tokyo, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency says Japan's nuclear safety regulation has improved since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but it still needs to strengthen inspections and staff competency. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Mission leader Philippe Jamet, a French regulatory commissioner, said Japan's inflexible inspection rules do not allow inspectors to move freely at nuclear facilities or respond quickly when there is a problem.

"What we found is that the system that is regulating, that is defining the framework of inspection is very complex and very rigid," Jamet said at a news conference.

Japan has a comprehensive framework but "it doesn't give enough

freedom for the inspectors to react immediately and to provide results," he said. "At any time and for any plant, inspectors should be allowed to go where they want."



Philippe Jamet, center, commissioner of France Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) and Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission team leader speaks the remarks during the final meeting with and Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority Friday Jan. 22, 2016 in Tokyo. A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency says Japan's nuclear safety regulation has improved since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but it still needs to strengthen inspections and staff competency. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

A final report by the team is expected in about three months.

Japan's top nuclear commissioner, Shunichi Tanaka, acknowledged the shortcomings and said, "We have to focus on tackling the challenges of

inspection system and human resources."

Masakazu Shima, a Japanese regulator who assisted the inspection team, said the inspection issue was also raised by an earlier IAEA mission in 2007 but Japan never took action.



Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority Chairman Shunichi Tanaka, third from right, delivers the opening remarks during the final meeting with Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission team in Tokyo, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016. A team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency says Japan's nuclear safety regulation has improved since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, but it still needs to strengthen inspections and staff competency. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

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