

Japan plans floating wind farm near nuclear plant

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A man works on top of a wind tower in Higashi-Dori, Japan. Japan plans to build a floating wind farm near the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant as part of the country's disaster reconstruction effort, a government official said Thursday.

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Tokyo is seeking ways to reduce its reliance on atomic energy following the world's worst [nuclear crisis](#) since Chernobyl, and is eyeing the Pacific coast of Fukushima prefecture, the official said.

"This is part of the government's effort towards reconstructing the disaster area while promoting renewable energy," said an official at the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy.

"Building wind power turbines on land would be more difficult, because of the problems of [noise pollution](#) and city planning regulations," said the official, who asked not to be named. "So we are looking at the space offshore."

The energy agency plans to earmark up to 20 billion yen (\$261 million) for the project, with the money coming from a special extra budget

intended to finance the rebuilding of the disaster-hit northeast, the official said.

The project envisions six floating [wind turbines](#), each with a capacity of two megawatts, which planners hope will come into operation by 2015, he said.

The government expects the country's major wind turbine makers, such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Fuji Heavy Industries and Japan Steel Works, will take part, he added.

But he acknowledged the offshore project may face resistance from local fishermen, whose businesses have already suffered from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi [nuclear power plant](#).

The plant was swamped by the towering tsunami released by the March 11 earthquake, which battered key cooling systems, triggering explosions and meltdowns that released radiation into the environment.

The government has designated a 20 kilometre (12 mile) radius around the plant as a no-go zone, forcing tens of thousands to evacuate. Evacuees still have no idea when they will be able to return home.

Widespread public distrust of the technology has led Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda to pledge to reduce dependence on nuclear power, which accounted for a third of Japan's energy supply before the disaster, and to boost renewable energy projects.

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