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JUST PUBLISHED

**PLANNING AHEAD FOR FUTURE DECOMMISSIONING
OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS**

A new report by the Nuclear Energy Agency

As many nuclear power plants may reach the end of their lifetime during the next twenty years or so, decommissioning has become a topic of increasing interest to governments, regulators and industry.

A new report on *Decommissioning Nuclear Power Plants* released by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) analyses the relationships between nuclear power plant decommissioning policies as developed by governments, decommissioning strategies as proposed by industry and the resulting decommissioning costs. Also discussed are major cost drivers of a policy, strategy or technical nature.

For governments, particularly in those countries that have a deregulated electricity market, one essential aspect is to ensure that decommissioning funds will be available when needed, and that no “stranded” liabilities will be left to be financed by the taxpayers rather than by electricity consumers. For this reason, robust cost estimates are key elements in designing and implementing a national decommissioning policy.

For industry, it is essential to assess and monitor decommissioning costs in order to develop a coherent strategy that reflects national policy and assures workers and public safety while also being cost-effective.

The review of the data collected for the study showed a wide variation in many aspects of national decommissioning policies in the 26 participating countries. Decommissioning strategies adopted by industry also vary from country to country and from operator to operator. The variability between countries, utilities and power plant characteristics in a number of areas related to decommissioning leads to cost differences that are identified and analysed in the report.

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In spite of this cost variability, the study shows that decommissioning cost estimates reported remain below 500 USD/kWe for nearly all water reactors. The two cost elements representing a large share of total decommissioning costs are “dismantling” and “waste treatment and disposal”, with labour costs representing a sizeable share.

The report stresses that in all countries, decommissioning costs are robustly estimated and thoroughly analysed by the operators, the regulators and the governments, and that measures are in place to ensure that adequate funds are accumulated timely to fund decommissioning expenses.

DECOMMISSIONING NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS: Policies, Strategies and Costs
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