

EU countries to stress-test nuclear facilities after Japan plant crisis

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Energy ministers agree to rigorous examinations of atomic reactors to prevent situation similar to Fukushima

By Leigh Phillips | The Guardian

European Union member states have agreed to hold earthquake stress tests of nuclear plants across the bloc in response to the crisis at Japan's Fukushima operation.

Energy ministers, senior national officials and industry representatives meeting in Brussels on Tuesday unanimously backed rapidly drawn plans to test all such installations to ensure their safety against earthquakes on the scale of that which hit Japan on 11 March, but also relating to threats from tsunamis, terrorism, disruptions of cooling systems, the integrity of operational systems, back-up systems, overall design and the possibility of power cuts.

Even heatwaves on the scale of that which hit France in 2003 will be among the imagined scenarios plants are subjected to.

The EU energy commissioner, Günther Oettinger, told reporters after the meeting, also attended by senior industry officials: "We want to look at safety in the light of the terrible events in Japan. I think the time has come for that."

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