



Director Ishida (center of photo) in Nuclear Emergency Assistance and Training Center just after the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station

**“We are ready to do everything with all our efforts
for the reconstruction of Fukushima”**

An interview to Director Junichiro Ishida of the Fukushima Environmental Safety Center, Headquarters of Fukushima Partnership Operations

Director J. Ishida of the Fukushima Environmental Safety Center attended at the Great East Japan Earthquake Memorial and Reconstruction Ceremony held in Fukushima City on March 11, 2014. Director Ishida said, “I was deeply impressed to hear the lectures by many guests who passionately talked about their experiences in the earthquake and their hopes for reconstruction of Fukushima.” I asked Director Ishida about his present views after three years from the fateful day.

You moved to Fukushima just after the earthquake and the accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Since then you have been supervising the reconstructions. What do you feel now?

In short, I feel that three years flew like an arrow. When the earthquake happened, I was working as a Director of Safety Administration Department at the head office in Tokai. I quickly checked the safety of employees and facilities. But on the next day, the hydrogen explosion happened at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, so various serious problems took place. Then I began to join the project to support Fukushima in cooperation with the other institutes and sectors of JAEA. I never forget the hard works that have been made by the employees. Also I cannot forget that cooperation was willingly offered to help our project by elderly persons who have retired JAEA.

After I moved to Fukushima, we started “Decontamination Pilot Project” as a first step. On the basis of the results of this project, we started the next projects such as “Technical supports related to the decontamination and the developments of decontamination technology” and “Monitoring of radioactive cesium in environment for future prediction and sophistication of environmental measurement technology”. We set the opportunities to share the knowledge and technology through the conferences and symposiums. We also made an effort in the communication activities for the general public. However, I regret that a large number of residents are still forced to live in evacuation areas. So I think that we have to solve this problem at first. For this purpose, we are ready to do everything with all our efforts.



What is the most impressive matter for you in these three years?

The “Decontamination Pilot Project” is really the first big project in Japan, so there have been a lot of difficulties at the beginning. Among these difficulties, the most impressive one for me is the briefing sessions for the residents.

In early stage, we were very nervous because some opposing persons handed out leaflets at the entrance of the building where the sessions would be held. Even during the session, the room was noisy and session was confused due to the exciting persons. Nevertheless, I think the session was a good opportunity because we were able to understand the feelings of these protest persons through sincere discussion after the session. Through these briefing sessions, I learned difficulties in discussing under open atmosphere and gaining the understanding of a large indefinite number of people. One day, only a few persons attended the briefing session. In such a small session, I felt that it is really important to talk face to face with open mind.

Even if we thought that we did a good job, the residents did not necessarily think the problems were solved. I think that our task will be finally completed when all of the residents understand the present situations.

The “Decontamination Pilot Projects” were indeed large projects. What are your opinions on and future plans for “Decontamination efforts” in Fukushima?

In the “Decontamination Pilot Project”, which was conducted using already existing technologies in the areas where the radiation doses exceeded 20 mSv/year, we provided guidance for large-scale decontamination of outdoors and for measures to secure safety for workers related to radiation protection. Unfortunately the decontamination work began in November 2011, so the task was very hard due to the heavy snow and ice. In spite of these difficulties, we managed to compile an intermediate report in March 2012 and final report in the end of June 2012. I think that these reports are now contributing to the fundamental procedures of decontamination conducted in each area and radiation control. Our results are now helpful to the guidelines for decontamination. I hope that our results will further contribute to the real decontamination processes as a next step.

What activities must be done about the environmental recovery in Fukushima, and what activities will become important in future?

First of all, the situation at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station must be improved, because it is the main cause of the environmental contamination. This task must be considered as the responsibility of the entire Headquarters of Fukushima Partnership Operations, rather than just the Fukushima Environmental Safety Center alone. All required steps, such as maintaining stable plant conditions, removing spent nuclear fuel, removing fuel debris (melted fuel), and countermeasures for increasing contaminated water, demand time and manpower. Therefore we have to make effort consistently to move forward with these tasks with a clear roadmap for decommissioning.

More concretely, we will develop remote control technology for decommissioning of the reactor. Also we will construct facilities for mock-up test to demonstrate the technology, and research laboratories for analysis of radioactive materials. I hope many researchers and technicians from inside and outside of Japan will gather together in these facilities, and identify lessons learned from the accident so that such lessons can be used for the safe design and safe operation of nuclear power plant in the world. I think this is really the main obligation of JAEA.



Photograph of decontamination work for farms. The workers are stripping soil at top surface region.

What about the future activities of the Fukushima Environmental Safety Center?

The “Fukushima Prefectural Centre for Environmental Creation” will soon be established as a base for various activities in cooperation with Fukushima Prefecture and the National Institute for Environmental Studies. The facilities are planned to be open in Minamisoma City in 2015, and Miharu Town in 2016. Minamisoma facility will mainly be involved in the developments of environmental monitoring and remote monitoring in cooperation with the Environmental Radioactivity Monitoring Center of Fukushima. At the research laboratory in Miharu Town, joint research with the National Institute for Environmental Studies will focus on encouraging residents to return home, improvements of decontamination technology to contribute to the environmental recovery, and surveys and R&D on the movement and reduction of radioactive materials in environment. An exchange center will also be open at the Miharu facility with the aim of “Learning and transmitting information” regarding environmental recovery and creation. The facility will become a “Center of Discussion and Co-creation” to create future of Fukushima with children and residents.

In order to promote restoration of Fukushima from the disaster, it will be important to carefully check our current activities and continue our efforts.



Image of research building being constructed in Minamisoma City*



Image of research and exchange building being constructed in Miharu Town*

*** From Fukushima Prefecture presentation materials**