

## Cost info on spent nuclear fuel quashed

*Costs depend also on how much the power is required in the future. Throwing away resources is only something that the US can do.*

The Japan Times  
July 4, 2004

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?nn20040704a3.htm>

The Japanese Government withdraws estimates showing that burying is cheaper than recycling.

The government has withdrawn two estimates showing that the cost of burying spent nuclear fuel in the ground is much lower than that of recycling nuclear fuel, government officials have said.

Critics charged that the withdrawal of the information reflects the government's wish to avoid an increase in calls that it review its policy that favors recycling nuclear fuel.

The Radioactive Waste Management Center, an organization affiliated with the old Ministry of International Trade and Industry, estimated in March 1998 that it would cost 4 trillion yen to 6 trillion yen to bury spent nuclear fuel deep in the ground, compared with 3.4 trillion yen to 5 trillion yen needed to reprocess it.

But reprocessing would also entail some 11 trillion yen to build and dismantle the necessary facilities. Therefore, according to the estimate, reprocessing spent fuel would be two to four times costlier than direct disposal.

According to an estimate by an advisory panel to the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy in February 1994, the cost of direct disposal was put at 0.348 yen per kilowatt-hour of power generation, compared with 1.336 yen for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel.

During a committee session in the House of Councilors in March, an opposition lawmaker asked for the estimated cost of burying spent nuclear fuel in the ground.

But Kazumasa Kusaka, then director general of the agency, said there were no cost estimates other than those of reprocessing.

On Friday, however, Kusaka, now vice minister for international affairs at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, changed his view and said he did not know about the 1994 and 1998 estimates.

Admitting the existence of the estimates, energy agency officials said they will submit the documents to the Atomic Energy Commission that advises the government on nuclear policies.