

## Atomic commission buried cost estimates

*Direct cost estimates are not relevant. What matters are estimates of future demand of resources.*

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?nn20040707a5.htm>

The Atomic Energy Commission had concealed from the public estimates made a decade ago showing that burying spent nuclear fuel was up to 2.4 times cheaper than recycling it, commission members said Tuesday.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry formally admitted Monday that it had concealed similar estimates from the public.

Despite the findings, the commission compiled a long-term nuclear energy plan based on the recycling of spent nuclear fuel to deal with radioactive waste.

The commission said the cost projection was made at a section meeting in 1994.

The former Science and Technology Agency, which was working with the commission then, came up with the cost projection for burying nuclear waste based on estimations that were compiled by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The cost projection suggested that recycling would be between 1.5 times and 2.4 times more expensive than burying it.

But the final report compiled by the commission did not contain the projection.

It stated only that it was difficult to make strict cost comparisons between the two methods.

## Chief faces reprimand

Shoichi Nakagawa, minister of economy, trade and industry, said Tuesday he will reprimand a former chief of the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy for suppressing data tied to the cost of burying spent nuclear fuel.

Kazumasa Kusaka, now vice minister of economy, trade and industry minister for international affairs, denied the existence of the data during a Diet session in March.

"We take the latest case seriously," Nakagawa told a news conference. "We will conduct in-house investigations and report the outcome to regain trust in our nuclear power policy."

The data, drawn up in February 1994 by an advisory committee to the agency, estimated that it is far cheaper to bury spent nuclear fuel than recycle it. The agency is an affiliate of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Critics say the government concealed the information to avoid public calls for a review of its nuclear fuel recycling policy.