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Mineral used to absorb radioactive materials

The operator of the troubled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant has begun placing a mineral in the sea to absorb radioactive materials contaminating the seawater around the plant.

Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO, on Friday dropped sandbags containing the mineral zeolite into the sea near the plant's water intakes. Zeolite is widely used to absorb contaminating materials.

TEPCO hopes the zeolite will absorb radioactive materials, including cesium-137, which has a half-life of 30 years.

The utility company plans to drop in 10 sandbags each containing 100 kilograms of zeolite. It will raise the bags at regular intervals to check the radiation levels on their surfaces.

Earlier this month, highly radioactive water was found leaking into the sea from a facility at the No.2 reactor. The health ministry later detected radioactivity above the legal limit in fish caught off the plant.

TEPCO has carried out construction work to stop the leak and is checking for others.

In other efforts to prevent the spread of radioactive substances in the sea, the company has already installed metal boards and underwater barriers near the plant.

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