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Aftershock batters nuclear plants

Nuclear power plants and related facilities in the coastal areas of northeastern Japan were forced to rely on emergency power after their electricity was cut off in Thursday night's quake.

Operations have been suspended at all nuclear power plants from Aomori to Ibaraki prefectures since the March 11th earthquake and tsunami. But electricity is still crucial to keep their cooling systems operating.

Japan's nuclear agency says all external power lines at Higashidori nuclear power plant in Aomori Prefecture were knocked out in Thursday's quake. The plant switched to emergency diesel power generators for some hours, but power was later restored.

The quake shut down 3 of the 4 external power lines at Onagawa nuclear power plant in Miyagi Prefecture. It is still operating on the one remaining power line.

The Onagawa plant also suffered water leaks at 8 locations, including water that spilled from spent fuel storage pools at each of its 3 reactors. A device to control pressure inside a turbine building was also damaged.

In addition, the quake disabled all external power lines at a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Aomori Prefecture. The cooling systems here are still running on emergency diesel power.

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