

# The Telegraph

## Japan: elderly engineers want 'final mission' to Fukushima

A group of elderly Japanese engineers are prepared to come out of retirement to fix the Fukushima nuclear power plant for their final mission.



More than 1,000 people, including young subcontractors, are currently working in sensitive conditions at Fukushima Photo: AP

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By Danielle Demetriou in Tokyo

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More than 160 nuclear and civil engineers over the age of 60 are planning to set up a Skilled Veterans Corps to assist restoring control over crucial cooling functions at the tsunami-hit nuclear power plant.

Decades of professional engineering expertise combined with a desire to protect younger workers from radiation exposure have united the elderly workers in a desire to help fix the plant.

The idea was masterminded by Yasuteru Yamada, 72, a retired engineer formerly working in plant construction, who was alarmed by reports of young subcontractors, some unskilled in this field, undertaking the high-risk work.

"We shouldn't leave the work only to young engineers," he said. "Young people, especially those who have children in future, should not be exposed to radiation." More than 1,000 people, including young

subcontractors, are currently working in sensitive conditions at Fukushima in an on-going bid to restore control at the damaged six-reactor plant.

Under the new proposal, an independent body of skilled engineers over the age of 60 would be authorised by the government to take over ground work restoring cooling systems alongside Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which operates the plant.

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Conditions surrounding radiation exposure would remain strictly monitored for the older workers as part of the scheme, which is being supported by a number of politicians.

Organisers dismissed potential comparisons with World War Two kamikazi suicide pilot fighters, although some workers said they would be willing to give their lives to fix the plant.

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