

Okuma Analysis Newspaper

“Analysis” and “Action”

Interview with Mr. Kawase from the ANALYSIS LAB.



▲Mr. Keiichi Kawase, Deputy Director of the Fukushima Research Institute for Decommissioning Engineering

Analyzing various materials related to reactor decommissioning

On Thursday, August 7, Journalism School Team 3 visited the JAEA ANALYSIS LAB., located inside the “CREVA Okuma” facility in Okuma Town, Futaba County.

They were welcomed by Mr. Keiichi Kawase (60), Deputy Director of the *Fukushima Research and Engineering Institute*, and his colleagues.

The ANALYSIS LAB. is part of the *Fukushima Research and Engineering Institute*. It provides hands-on experiences with analysis methods and serves as part of JAEA’s public outreach efforts.

Mr. Kawase, who is from Fukui Prefecture, was in Gifu Prefecture when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck 14 years ago. Watching the live news coverage, he recalled feeling anxious and thinking, “*Cool the reactors as quickly as possible.*” He said that the most rewarding part of his work is when he can transform something thought to be impossible into something achievable by analyzing the unknown.

What is the ANALYSIS LAB.?

JAEA stands for the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, a national research and development organization conducting comprehensive studies on nuclear energy.

The ANALYSIS LAB. is part of JAEA’s *Fukushima Research and Engineering Institute*. Its purpose is both to share information and to foster human resources for decommissioning work.

“Analysis” means to examine and understand something — their concept is “*Making the invisible visible.*”

They explain complex topics such as radiation and analytical techniques in easy-to-understand ways.



▲ Having the components of a brought-in substance analyzed

▲ Experiencing a whole-body inspection inside the radiation measurement vehicle

Sharing Fukushima’s knowledge with the world — and developing future talent

“Decommissioning is a technology the world has never experienced before,” said Mr. Kawase.

“To dispose of radioactive materials safely, we must first understand what substances we are dealing with. That’s what our analysis is for.

At TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, we’ve only just begun retrieving fragments of the melted fuel debris. The real analysis starts now and will take a long time.

It’s a task we must pass on to the next generation.

Nuclear research is a comprehensive science — it involves not only physics, chemistry, and biology, but even the humanities.”

Decommissioning continues

The decommissioning process will continue for years to come, and securing new talent to carry on the expertise of Mr. Kawase’s generation is essential.

“At the Institute, we engage in various activities to help the public understand the progress of decommissioning,” said Mr. Kawase.

“One of our goals is to reach the point where decommissioning is fully completed — when people say Fukushima no longer needs this facility.”

Applying research to medicine

JAEA is also working to apply its research results to the medical field.

Radiation-based pharmaceuticals use artificial radioactive substances such as *einsteinium* that attach to and attack only cancer cells, minimizing the burden on the body.

This newspaper was created by members of Team 3:

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▲ Commemorative photo in front of the whole-body measurement vehicle

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Why the lowercase “i” and the period? “It looks stylish.”

We asked Ms. Satomi Ito, a staff member, why the “i” in *ANALYSIS LAB.* is lowercase and why there’s a period at the end.

She replied, “That’s a great question! It’s simply because it looks stylish and stands out, which helps attract attention. If you search with a lowercase *i*, you’ll find it easily.”

Editorial:

How long must we wait for decommissioning?

Fuel debris refers to the mixture of melted reactor fuel and structural materials that solidified after cooling.

As of August 2025, the second trial removal from Unit 2 has been completed. However, this test removal is already three years behind schedule, and delays are starting to affect the overall decommissioning plan.

TEPCO announced that the start of full-scale fuel debris retrieval would be postponed from early fiscal 2030 to fiscal 2037 or later. If these delays continue, it will be difficult to achieve the target year of 2051 for completion — as outlined in the government and TEPCO’s *Mid- and Long-Term Roadmap towards Decommissioning*. Some estimates suggest that full decommissioning could take over 100 years.

Currently, no final disposal method for fuel debris has been determined.

This interview made it clear that “analysis” is the crucial first step toward safe decommissioning.

Because existing technologies alone are insufficient, developing new methods and cultivating sustainable human resources for long-term decommissioning and technical succession is essential. What is needed now is to revise the decommissioning roadmap into realistic goals and for everyone involved — including our generation — to work together as one toward the long journey of decommissioning.

(Written by Naoto Sugawara)