

## Japan considers 60 year reactor lifespan

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**In a move that will bring Japan more into line with the US licensing system, the government will consider a proposal to set 40 years as the standard lifespan for the country's nuclear reactors, with a possible extension to 60 years if plants meet stringent safety criteria.**

The cabinet taskforce proposal follows remarks made by nuclear crisis minister Goshi Hosono earlier this month that Japanese nuclear reactors should have a nominal lifespan of 40 years – this as part of a safety and regulatory review commissioned in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. At that time it was not officially announced whether any life extensions would be considered.

Chief cabinet secretary Osamu Fujimura today clarified that there has been no basic change in the government's position. According to Fujimura, extensions would be granted once only and limited to a maximum of 20 years, contingent on exacting safety requirements.

According to Japanese national broadcaster NHK, the government plans to submit draft legislation by the end of this month.

Under the US licensing system, reactors are originally offered an operating licence for 40 years – a timespan based on economic and anti-trust considerations, according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Over half of the US fleet of 104 operating reactors have now received 20 year extensions.

Applying for a licence extension is a major undertaking for a plant that usually takes about 30 months to complete and involves rigorous safety and environmental impact assessments as well as public engagement.