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TVO anticipates loading fuel into OL3 in late 2018

Finnish utility Teollisuuden Voima Oyj (TVO) said it plans to start loading fuel into the core of the Olkiluoto 3 (OL3) EPR in the autumn, once an operating licence has been granted. However, the company said it is awaiting confirmation from the Areva-Siemens consortium that **start-up of the unit is still scheduled for May 2019.**

TVO said in the April edition of its newsletter that a total of 128 tonnes of fuel for the EPR has been delivered to the Olkiluoto site in southwest Finland. It noted, "There's a lot of work still to be done both before loading and after."

Hot functional tests at the first-of-a-kind EPR began in December. TVO noted these are the first tests at plant-level where the reactor and turbine plant are operated as a whole, although still without fuel. It said the water temperature and the pressure of the primary circuit have been gradually increased to the level where they would be during actual operation. During the hot testing stage, more than 200 systematic tests will be carried out, TVO said.

"Once this stage has been successfully completed, a safety assessment is expected from the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority and, thereafter, the decision by the Finnish government on the operating licence," the company said. "Once the operating licence has been granted, steps will be taken towards loading the fuel."

TVO said it anticipates loading the 241 fuel assemblies into the 1600 MWe pressurised water reactor in the autumn.

"That does not mean the immediate start of electricity production," TVO noted. "Testing will continue after the loading. In the autumn, some of the tests already carried out during the hot testing in the spring will be repeated." One reason for repeating these tests, it said, was that the loading of fuel into the reactor affects the circulation of the cooling water.

Under the latest schedule for Olkiluoto 3, grid connection takes place in December, with the start of regular electricity production in May next year. The unit's ramp-up programme will see it produce 2-4 TWh of electricity, at varying power levels between those dates.

However, TVO said it is waiting for "an overall rebaseline schedule" from the Areva-Siemens consortium "due to some delays in the hot functional testing phase". It added, "It is not yet possible to estimate whether or not the schedule will influence the start of regular electricity production in May 2019."

The Areva-Siemens consortium began construction of Olkiluoto 3 in 2005 under a turnkey contract signed with TVO in late 2003. **Completion of the reactor was originally scheduled for 2009**, but the project has suffered various delays and setbacks.

Last month TVO agreed a settlement with Areva-Siemens in the long-running dispute over cost overruns and delays to the project. The consortium will pay TVO compensation of EUR450 million (USD554 million), while the supplier consortium companies are entitled to receive an "incentive payment" of up to EUR150 million.

Jouni Silvennoinen, TVO's OL3 Project Manager, said : "This deal is a good thing. The turnkey principle of the contract remains in force but previous disagreements are now settled. The table has been cleared and we have a fresh start focusing on the successful start of OL3."

Fuel loading fuel at the Taishan 1 EPR in China's Guangdong province began earlier this month following the issuance of a permit from the Chinese regulator. **The unit is later this year scheduled to become the first EPR reactor to enter operation.** Fuel loading at the Flamanville EPR in France is scheduled to begin the fourth quarter of this year, but it remains unclear whether flaws discovered in certain welds in the unit's secondary system will delay this.

*Researched and written
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