

# The Telegraph

## Japan nuclear crisis: 'Fukushima 50' face new setback

The "Fukushima Fifty," the group of Japanese workers battling the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986, faced a new setback following a spike in pressure at one of the reactors they are trying to contain.



The Japanese government confirmed the entire Fukushima Daiichi complex will be scrapped once the disaster is contained Photo: REUTERS



By [Nick Allen \(http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/nick-allen/\)](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/nick-allen/), Tokyo

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It occurred in a holding vessel around reactor three at the stricken Fukushima Daiichi plant, and forced engineers to consider releasing more radioactive material into the atmosphere. A similar tactic produced explosions during the early days of the crisis.

Officials warned that a release of radiation this time would be larger than in previous releases because more nuclear fuel had degraded.

They said the process could involve the emission of a cloud dense with iodine, as well as the radioactive elements krypton and xenon.

Japan's health ministry said it had advised residents in Iitate, a village of about 6,000 19 miles northwest of the nuclear plant, not to drink tap water due to the levels of radioactive iodine which were three times the normal level.

Tepco, the plant operator, temporarily suspended the venting plan after pressure inside the reactor stopped climbing, but said it was still at a high level.

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[Japan nuclear crisis: Engineers make progress in cooling reactors](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-in/8394941/Japan-nuclear-crisis-Engineers-make-progress-in-cooling-reactors.html)

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-in/8394941/Japan-nuclear-crisis-Engineers-make-progress-in-cooling-reactors.html>)

[Japan: power back on at Fukushima nuclear plant](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8394963/Japan-nuclear-crisis-fears-over-food-contamination.html)

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8394963/Japan-nuclear-crisis-fears-over-food-contamination.html>)

[Tsunami survivors rescued](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8395842/Japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-survivors-rescued.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/8395842/Japan-earthquake-and-tsunami-survivors-rescued.html>)

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[plans'](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/8393878/Chris-Huhne-Britain-may-scale-back-nuclear-plans-after-Japan-disaster.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/energy/8393878/Chris-Huhne-Britain-may-scale-back-nuclear-plans-after-Japan-disaster.html>)

[Last bus of Brits leaves Sendai](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8393734/Japan-earthquake-last-bus-of-Brits-leaves-Sendai.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8393734/Japan-earthquake-last-bus-of-Brits-leaves-Sendai.html>)

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Hikaru Kuroda, a Tepco manager, said temperatures inside reactor three, which contains highly toxic plutonium, had reached 572F (300C) but had "stabilised" after seawater was continuously pumped in to keep it cool.

In a positive development workers were close to restoring the electricity supply to the plant's six reactors, which they hope will allow them to restart the cooling systems knocked out by the earthquake on March 11.

The [Japanese](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/>) government confirmed the entire Fukushima Daiichi complex will be scrapped once the disaster is contained.

Japanese officials also admitted they were unprepared for the nuclear disaster and failed to hand out iodine pills to people living in the area.

They gave potassium iodide, which helps to reduce the risk of thyroid cancer, to those living within a 12 mile (20km) radius of the plant only three days after an explosion which should have triggered an immediate distribution.

Speaking in the city of Fukushima Kazuma Yokota, a safety official, said: "We should have made this decision and announced it sooner. It is true that we had not foreseen a disaster of these proportions. We had not practised or trained for something this bad. We must admit that we were not fully prepared."

The effects of the radioactive leaks continued to spread yesterday with small amounts of radiation found in spinach and milk from nearby farms, in tap water in Tokyo, and in rainfall and dust over a wider area. None of the levels were harmful to human health.

Taiwan became the first country to report low levels of radiation in Japanese imports, in a batch of contaminated fava beans.

Yukio Edano, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, said: "Our desperate efforts to prevent the situation worsening are making certain progress. But we must not underestimate this situation, and we are not being optimistic that things will suddenly improve." Tepco's president has issued a public apology for "causing such great concern and nuisance." Ten days before the disaster the company admitted to Japan's nuclear safety watchdog that it had failed to inspect 33 pieces of equipment at the plant.

A power board distributing electricity to a reactor's temperature control valves had not been examined for 11 years.

Two nuclear safety agencies said: "Long-term inspection plans and maintenance management were inadequate."

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