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California man's concrete pump headed to Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant

Mark Glover | The Sacramento Bee

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A Sacramento businessman hopes his company's massive concrete boom pump will help bury Japan's nuclear reactor worries.

Mike Parigini, the 60-year-old founder and owner of Associated Concrete Pumping in Sacramento, has sold his nearly 190,000-pound pump back to its maker — Putzmeister America Inc. of Sturtevant, Wis.

Parigini said the pump will soon be on its way to Japan, likely to initially help cool leaking nuclear reactors with streams of water, then later, encase them under tons of concrete.

Putzmeister America officials said Thursday that Parigini and a Georgia concrete contractor "made the pumps available upon learning of the need in Japan."

"To be honest, I feel like my only contribution was helping with initial design of the machine," Parigini said Thursday. "Otherwise, we're just doing what businesses do: take problems and try to fix them.

Parigini said Putzmeister — an arm of Germany's Putzmeister Concrete Pumps GmbH — has already been working with Japanese authorities to help cool the leaky nuclear reactors in northern Japan.

But the long-term plan, Parigini said, calls for the pumps to be used to pour acres of concrete onto them, sealing off airborne contamination.

Putzmeister is sending Parigini's pump, the one in Georgia and two smaller ones to join a pump already working at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Parigini described the effort ahead as "a Herculean logistical task."

Putzmeister said Parigini's 70Z-Meter concrete pump is the world's largest and includes a boom that can reach over 227 feet. It's scheduled to leave Los Angeles International Airport at 5 a.m. Saturday.

The pump is so huge that it will travel on a Russian Antonov-225 cargo jet, one of the world's largest aircraft.

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