

MailOnline

Radiation levels in seawater at crippled Fukushima plant jump 6,500 times above legal limit ahead of new 5.9 earthquake

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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Radiation levels have risen dramatically in seawater near the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan, sparking fears of a new leak, according to the country's government.

The announcement came ahead of a fresh 5.9-magnitude earthquake that hit the Kanto region, in the eastern part of the country on Saturday morning.

Ironically the new quake hit hours after the country's nuclear safety agency ordered plant operators to beef up their quake alert systems to prevent a recurrence of the previous nuclear crisis.



New Leak: Volunteers arrive to clean up tsunami generated debris in Iwate prefecture, while radiation levels have risen dramatically in seawater near the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant

There were no reports of damage from the earthquake, and there was no risk of a tsunami similar to the one that struck the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant.

Since the earthquake and tsunami of March 11 knocked out the nuclear plant's cooling systems, workers have been spraying massive amounts of water on the overheated reactors.

Levels in the water had dropped, but on Friday levels of radioactive iodine-131 were found to have spiked to 6,500 times the legal limit.



Risk: Japanese police officers carry a body in Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, close to where radiation levels had rise 6,500 times above the legal limit

This was up from 1,100 times the limit in samples taken the day before.

Levels of cesium-134 and cesium-137 rose nearly fourfold. The increased levels are still far below those recorded earlier this month before the initial leak was plugged on April 5.

The new rise in radioactivity could have been caused by the installation on Friday of steel panels that were intended to contain radiation that may have temporarily stirred up stagnant waste in the area, Hidehiko Nishiyama of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency told reporters.



Devastation: Two sisters look at a catamaran that was thrown onto a two-storey building during the tsunami, at Iwate prefecture,

while a fresh 5.9-magnitude hit Eastern Japan on Saturday morning

However, the increase in iodine-131, which has a relatively short eight-day half life, could signal the possibility of a new leak, he said.

'We want to determine the origin and contain the leak, but I must admit that tracking it down is difficult,' he said.

Authorities have insisted the radioactivity will dissipate and poses no immediate threat to sea creatures or people who might eat them. Most experts agree.



String of disasters: A fire broke out at the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant last week, but was soon extinguished

Regardless, plant workers today began dumping sandbags filled with zeolite, a mineral that absorbs radioactive cesium, into the sea to combat the radiation leaks.

Meanwhile, the newspaper Asahi Shimbun reported, without citing its sources, that a secret plan to dismantle Tokyo Electric Power Co, which runs the radiation-leaking Fukushima plant, was circulating within the government.

The proposal calls for putting TEPCO, the world's largest private electricity company, under close government supervision before putting it into bankruptcy and thoroughly restructuring its assets.

In the wake of the nuclear crisis, the government ordered 13 nuclear plant operators to check and improve outside power links to avoid earthquake-related outages that could cause safety systems to fail as they did at the Fukushima plant, Nishiyama said.



Damage: Despite its size there were no reports of damage from the new earthquake, and there was no risk of another tsunami

The operators, including TEPCO, are to report back by May 16.

Power outages during a strong aftershock on April 7 drove home the need to ensure that plants are able to continue to operate crucial cooling systems and other equipment despite earthquakes, tsunamis and other disasters, Nishiyama said.

Utility companies were ordered to reinforce the quake resistance of power lines connected to each reactor or to rebuild them.

They also must store all electrical equipment in watertight structures. Earlier, the nuclear agency ordered plant operators to store at least two emergency backup generators per reactor and to install fire pumps and power supply vehicles as further precautions.



Still searching: A man looks for his lost belongings amongst tsunami devastation, as cherry blossoms bloom in Iwate prefecture

The massive 14-metre wave that swamped Fukushima Dai-ichi last month knocked out emergency generators meant to power cooling systems. Since then, explosions, fires and other malfunctions have compounded efforts by TEPCO to repair the plant and stem radiation leaks.

TEPCO said it had moved power sources for some of the reactors at the stricken plant to higher ground by Friday evening in order to avoid another disastrous failure in the event of a tsunami.

Goshi Hosono, an adviser to the prime minister and member of the nuclear crisis management task force, said the damaged reactors were much more stable than they had been earlier in the crisis and TEPCO was preparing to unveil a plan for restoring cooling capacity to the ailing reactors 'soon.'

'Problems are still piled up and we are far from the end of crisis,' he told a TV news programme, citing radioactive water as one of the biggest headaches.

'I expect there will be more mountains that we have to climb over.'

The crisis at the Fukushima plant has forced tens of thousands of people to evacuate the area, while radiation leaks have contaminated crops and left fishermen unable to sell their catches, adding to the suffering of communities already devastated by earthquake and tsunami damage.

Government officials fanned out across the affected areas to explain their decisions and calm nerves.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Tetsuro Fukuyama apologised for the uncertainty and confusion to residents in Litate village, parts of which the government recommended be evacuated because of the nuclear crisis.

'Everyone in the village must be extremely troubled, uncertain and worried,' he said, promising to provide temporary housing and financial support for the residents, many of them farmers.

In the city of Inawashiro, Hiroshima University Professor Kenji Kamiya, who has been appointed a health risk adviser to Fukushima prefecture, met with about 250 education officials to explain that radiation levels in the area do not pose an immediate or significant threat to the public.

'I hope people understand that the levels we are seeing are fairly low. Even in the most impacted areas, we have screened more than 1,000 children for radiation abnormalities in their thyroids and have found none at all,' he said.

Kamiya has been giving almost daily lectures in an effort to prevent people from overreacting to the possible danger.

'People fear things that they don't understand. We were even afraid before of the rain, because we just didn't know if it was safe,' said Takaaki Kobayashi, a father of two grade school children.

'I feel more comfortable now about sending kids to school. It helps to understand.'

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I apologise for the multiple posts, I had router issues at the time. As regards the red arrows on my comments, I am a professional engineer and am only interested in facts, so have made it my business to find them out. I am appalled by the hysterical and misleading reporting on the state of the nuclear plants, hence my post.. The radiation from the plant is in the majority iodine, which has a half-life of 8 days, and therefore dwindles to nothing in a matter of weeks. Caesium 137 is much more long-lasting and any would undoubtedly be more difficult to eradicate. These plants have produced vast quantities of electricity safely and economically for the last 40+years and with the other 49 reactors contributed greatly to the prosperity of Japan over that period. It is up to the Japanese people to decide if the current problems are worth that record. After all, we happily fly despite just 1 plane crash killing more people than have been killed directly as a result of nuclear accidents.

- John Dowling, Ballasalla Isle of Man, 17/4/2011 23:23

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Go with what you know... * To live life in the physical form, is the gift of life, the one you live. * We procreate, the birth of life, beginning, soul, new energy. * This planet is here to live that life in the physical form, air, water, food, etc. * The planet which is for EVERYONE to live that life, as a whole. Which tells us we are all here for each other, to learn and grow (the mind). * The only difference in who we are from the day we were born till the day we die is what we think. More importantly, is what we're fed. * The main purpose for all this to happen is to preserve, nourish and care for the planet so that life can continue its purpose.

- KB, Canada, 17/4/2011 16:08

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Nuclear radiation changes the DNA of the cells. The effects of moderate radiation is a significantly increased risk of cancer over the years ahead. Of course high doses kill quickly and those close to the plant and those in particular fighting the over heating nuclear reactors are in grave danger. Add to that that the land will be polluted for hundreds and even thousands of years ahead and it is a grave situation. My heart goes out to those people stuck there in the midst of all the chaos. Looking at this and looking at Chernobyl, 3 mile Island and Windscale here at home surely it is certain that nuclear is a risk to far. We don't even need it we are rich in natural resources and have 600 hundred years of coal beneath us. We have scrubbing and ways to remove the carbon emissions now, so it is much cleaner. Our own people need the work in real jobs, instead of importing expensive coal we could use our own. Lets not forget wave power as well, we are an island surrounded by water

- Marie, Lancs, 17/4/2011 15:48

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For all those saying that nuclear power is safe id like you to consider the following: 1. Nuclear power creates waste that has to be "stored" for the next few thousand years (AT VERY MINIMUM) 2. EVERY large company in the world does their darnest to save money and the nuclear operators are NO DIFFERENT 3. Nuclear radiation might not kill you but lets see the result a few generations down your blood line!!! its truely the gift that keeps on giving 4. Its pretty obvious they are lying a lot!! just look at the difference of one countries safe zone and another? Japanese government does have a history of helping large corporations to save face.....its kinda in their blood 5. RADIATION 100 times above normal has been detected in rain water in america over 8000km away..... this stuff will give you cancer!!! 6. Plenty of viable options to nuclear power available and if you must use nuclear power then there are safer reactors called Thorium reactors go look them up!!

- Chris, Melbourne Australia, 17/4/2011 13:28

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Radiation levels have been steadily falling, the workers at the plants are all still within safety limits on radiation exposure and nuclear power generation is STILL by far and away the safest means of electricity generation. No-one has been killed at the plant (except for the 2 employees drowned by the tsunami), no-one has been injured by radiation and once the engineering issues are sorted out people will be able to return to their homes. Not much of a story, really. - John Dowling, Ballasalla, Isle fo Man, So go and live there then.

- Karen, UK, 17/4/2011 11:02

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Tokyo Power are complete cowboys and shouldn't be running anything! Now they are stating it will be nine months before it is under control, up from three months just a week ago! -----Radiation levels in the sea on 2nd April where 7.5 million times normal levels but were we told that in the UK?-----The only up to date news you can get is from NHK World TV on Sky 516.

- Simon, Birmingham, 17/4/2011 10:29

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