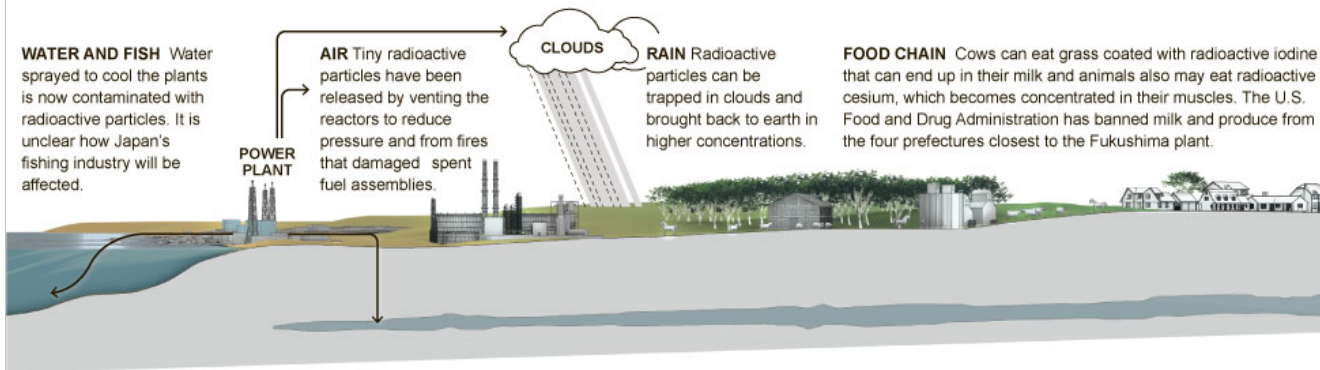


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How Radiation Contamination Can Travel



WATER AND FISH Water sprayed to cool the plants is now contaminated with radioactive particles. It is unclear how Japan's fishing industry will be affected.

AIR Tiny radioactive particles have been released by venting the reactors to reduce pressure and from fires that damaged spent fuel assemblies.

RAIN Radioactive particles can be trapped in clouds and brought back to earth in higher concentrations.

FOOD CHAIN Cows can eat grass coated with radioactive iodine that can end up in their milk and animals also may eat radioactive cesium, which becomes concentrated in their muscles. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has banned milk and produce from the four prefectures closest to the Fukushima plant.

GROUNDWATER Soil is likely to absorb most particles from the plant, but reservoirs and other above-ground sources can be contaminated. There has already been a warning about drinking water.

INDUSTRIAL Radioactive particles can coat surfaces, but facilities can be decontaminated with water or vacuums. Whether any plants will need to be cleaned is not known.

RURAL Rain can leave radioactive particles on crops and other vegetation. Or the soil can absorb the rain and the roots of the plants can soak up the particles.

RESIDENTIAL Radioactive particles can enter homes by rain or particles can get in through air conditioners and open windows. Residents just outside the evacuation zone of the Fukushima plant have been told to stay indoors.

By GRAHAM ROBERTS and DYLAN McCLAIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES | [Send Feedback](#)

Sources: Nuclear Regulatory Commission; National Institutes of Health

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