



Thursday, May 5, 2011

Feds Abandon Extra Radiation Monitoring of Milk, Water

Routine measurements will resume; nuclear expert calls decision "staggering"

By: [John Upton](#)

The U.S. government has abandoned efforts to monitor elevated levels of radiation that infiltrated the nation's water and milk in the wake of a nuclear catastrophe in Japan.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has [faced stiff criticism](#) for its slow and spotty monitoring of radioactive iodine, cesium and other materials that were ejected into the atmosphere after the Fukushima nuclear power plant was struck by a tsunami in early March. The material [fell on the United States in rainwater](#) and was ingested by cows, which [passed it through into their milk](#).

Radiation levels in some milk and rain samples have exceeded normal long-term federal drinking water standards, but [EPA officials have described the levels as almost completely safe](#). [Anti-nuclear power activists have accused the federal government](#) of downplaying the health risks in an effort to protect the nuclear power industry and predicted that the radioactive isotopes will lead to a rash of cancers.

Now, less than two months after the nuclear disaster began to unfold, the EPA is abandoning most of its additional radiation monitoring activities. Recent monitoring has continued to detect the radiation in the North American environment, though at declining levels.

“Due to the consistent decrease in radiation levels across the country associated with the Japanese nuclear incident,” [the agency said in a statement Thursday](#), “EPA has returned to the routine RadNet sampling and analysis process for precipitation, drinking water and milk.”

That means that the agency will return to testing radiation levels in rainwater, drinking water and milk every three months. The next such tests are planned in August.

Additionally, the EPA said it is "evaluating the need" for additional radiation air monitors that were deployed around the nation after the nuclear accident.

The lack special monitoring efforts will make it more difficult for residents to assess the local hazards of the Japanese disaster. Critics lambasted the decision Thursday.