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# U.S. experts comment on Japan reactor crisis

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Saturday, March 12, 2011

## ROUND-UP: U.S. NUCLEAR EXPERTS COMMENT ON JAPAN REACTOR CRISIS

WASHINGTON, D.C.///March 12, 2011///The following comments were made by U.S. nuclear experts on the rapidly evolving Japanese reactor crisis:

Peter Bradford, former member of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

"An early tipoff that Japanese authorities felt that events at Fukushima warranted an evacuation within a couple of hours of the earthquake. Though the order was called 'precautionary,' the fact is that ordering several thousand more evacuees in the immediate aftermath of a major earthquake and tsunami is something that could possibly help it. Neither Three Mile Island nor Chernobyl were accidents then, authorities were loathe to evacuate, in part because evacuations are because they are admissions of a major failure. But with natural disasters about in panic anyway. They have no place to go. Traffic lights aren't working is disrupted. Police have other responsibilities. Many are seeing to their own safety would justify an evacuation at such a moment. The viability of US emergency reactor sites may have to be reexamined to determine whether they can be safe in the event of a nuclear accident precipitated by a natural disaster. This was always a theoretical possibility."

Arjun Makhijani, Ph.D., President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Studies:

"The Japanese authorities seem to be working from a standard nuclear industry model to be 'What me worry?' A frank appraisal of what is known and not known and consequences would be much more reassuring in that the public could understand the pronouncements of the authorities. That range could run from moderate to severe. In the present it is just too difficult to tell, not least because official verbal reassurances stand in stark contrast to repeated increases in the radius of evacuations."

Ira Helfand, MD, Physicians for Social Responsibility:

"It is not known how much radiation has been or will ultimately be released from the reactor in Japan, but as found by the National Academy of Sciences, any exposure to radiation increases a person's risk of cancer. No one, including the plants operators, can say what the potential risk is for millions of people are in harm's way. The Japanese government case scenario. After one year of operation, a commercial nuclear reactor could release as much radioactivity as was released by the Hiroshima bomb. From a public health perspective, short-lived isotopes of iodine (like Iodine-131), Cesium-137, and Plutonium-239. Radioactive iodine caused thousands of cases of thyroid cancer in the Chernobyl accident. Cesium and strontium cause a number of different kinds of cancer that are dangerous for hundreds of years; plutonium causes lung cancer as well as cancer of the bone and is deadly for hundreds of thousands of years."

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For additional background information, please refer to  
<http://www.psr.org/nuclear-bailout/japan-earthquakenuclear.pdf>

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