

**Subject:** Update: Nuclear crisis in Japan  
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**Dear Rosalind,**

I wish I had better news for you on the tragic disaster in Japan. As its magnitude becomes more apparent, please join me once again in sending thoughts or prayers to the people of Japan.

As earthquake recovery is beginning in the city of Sendai and the surrounding Miyagi Prefecture, the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi site is growing grimmer by the hour. When we last wrote to you, our focus was on reactors #1 and #3 at the Fukushima Daiichi site, where there are six reactors total. At the time, hydrogen explosions had occurred at the buildings in which reactors #1 and #3 are housed, and the government and TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) officials were fighting to regain control of the reactor cooling in order to prevent a total meltdown. We are fairly certain that fuel rods in both these reactors have at least partially melted.



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Since then, significant problems have occurred at reactors #2 and #4. Reactor #2 experienced an explosion worse than the previous explosions -- it may have damaged the reactor casing itself. News reports, as well as information from our colleagues in Japan, indicate that the fuel rods at reactor #2 have been partially or fully exposed due to loss of coolant. Without circulating water to keep the fuel rods cool, they can heat to temperatures as high as 2000 degrees Celsius and melt into a molten pool of radioactive slag. This slag has the capacity to burn through containment vessels and then emit high amounts of radiation and radioactive materials into the environment. We are still seeking information that describes the true extent of the damage.

In addition, the pool containing used nuclear reactor fuel rods at reactor #4 caught on fire, leading to radioactive releases high enough to endanger the brave workers and first responders who remain on-site attempting to prevent full meltdowns. The spent fuel rods need to be kept cool for several years after they are removed from a reactor. Recent reports indicate that the spent fuel pool at reactor #4 is at its boiling point and could be unapproachable. We are beginning to hear reports that the spent fuel pools at reactors #5 and #6 are heating up as well. This situation is still fluid, but problems with spent fuel pools could limit workers' capacity to gain control of the reactors. If additional fires and explosions occur at the pools, they could lead to massive radioactive releases.

Following our first update, [we heard from many members](#) asking about the impact of the radiation from the reactors in Japan and what implications this has for the United States. We are talking to experts and [compiling information and resources on our website](#). But I want to offer an important caveat: the Japanese

government, as well as TEPCO, may not be providing accurate information about radiation readings and our understanding of the situation depends on their reports.

I wish I had better news. I hope from the bottom of my heart that the Japanese government and the utility and its brave workers are successful at gaining control of the reactors and spent fuel pools. Unfortunately, if the situation gets worse, we are likely facing a human and environmental catastrophe.

**Regards,  
Erich**

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