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Contaminated Tokyo tap water is 'unfit for babies' as Japan radiation 'heads to Britain' from Fukushima plant

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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- **Radiation found in Tokyo tap water as fight for nuclear plant continues**
- **Reykjavik is first European city to detect particles from Japan**
- **Official death toll tops 9,400 with 13,000 people still missing**
- **U.S. halts food imports from affected areas of Japan**
- **Now 'costliest natural disaster' in history with estimates at £190billion**

Tokyo's tap water has been deemed 'unfit for babies' after radiation from the stricken Japanese nuclear power plant contaminated the Japanese water supply, officials have warned.

The warning comes after it emerged last night that radioactive particles have reached Europe and are heading towards Britain in the wake of the catastrophe that officials say could cost up to £190billion - making it the costliest natural disaster in history.

And fresh safety concerns arose today as black smoke was spotted emerging from Unit 3 of the plant, prompting a temporary evacuation of all workers from the complex, operators Tokyo Electric Power company said.



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Water spray: Workers at Fukushima yesterday try to cool the plant

Tokyo Water Bureau officials said levels of radioactive iodine in some city tap water contained 210 becquerels per litre of iodine 131 - two times the recommended limit for infants.

They warned parents not to give babies tap water, although they said it is not an immediate health risk for adults.

Nearly two weeks after the twin March 11 disasters, nuclear officials were still struggling to stabilise the damaged and overheated Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, which has been leaking radiation since the disasters knocked out the plant's cooling systems.

Radiation has seeped into vegetables, raw milk, the water supply and even seawater in the areas surrounding the plant.

Meanwhile, officials in Iceland have detected 'minuscule amounts' of radioactive particles believed to have come from Fukushima, the site of the worst nuclear accident in 25 years.



Smoke: Fresh safety concerns arose today as black smoke was spotted emerging from Unit 3 of the plant, prompting a temporary evacuation of all workers from the complex



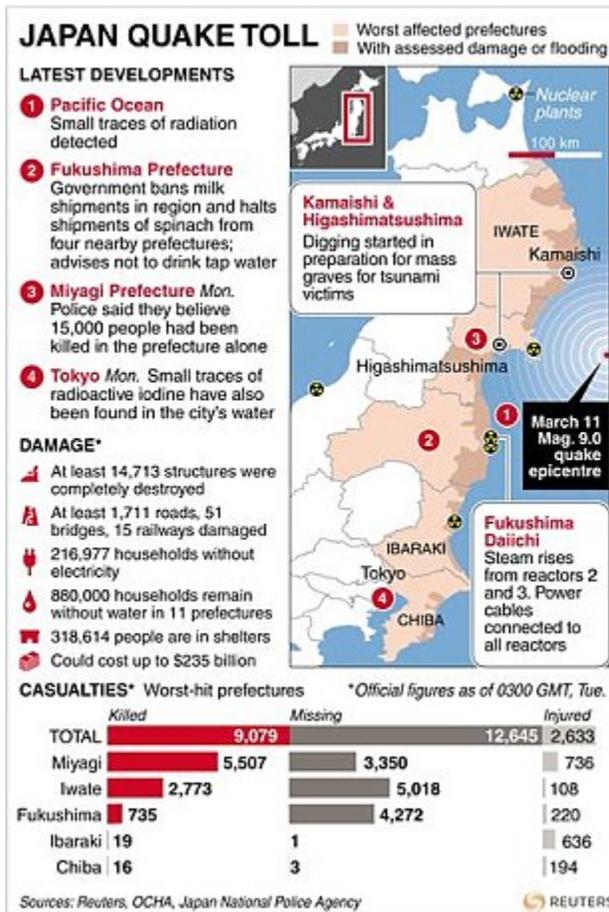
Battling on: Workers inside the central control room of reactor Unit 3 of the Fukushima complex

Last night the British Government said radiation from Japan had not been detected by the UK's network of monitoring stations set up after the 1986 Chernobyl explosion. A spokesman said any signs of radiation were not expected in the next few days.

However, France's nuclear agency said tiny amounts were likely to arrive in the country by today.

The traces of radioactive iodine are being measured by a network of 63 monitoring stations as they spread east across the Pacific, over North America and into the North Atlantic.





Radiation from nuclear accidents and explosions is monitored by the UN's Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation, based in Vienna.

A source said several stations had detected particles believed to have been released from Fukushima in the days after it was hit by the earthquake and tsunami.

'Reykjavik is the first in Europe,' the source added. The levels are about one millionth of the natural background radiation, and pose no threat to the public, experts said.



Sorry: Norio Tsuzumi (centre), vice president of Tokyo Electric Power Company which operates Japan's crippled nuclear plant, and his employees bow their heads to apologise to evacuees at a shelter in Koriyama, 60 kms west of Fukushima

'We are not expecting it to be detected in Britain in the next few days,' a spokesman for the Department of Energy and Climate Change said.

Japanese officials said the health risk was low outside the plant, but were yesterday chastised by the International Atomic Energy Agency watchdog over a lack of information about how much radiation had been emitted.

Levels in Tokyo rose ten-fold in the days after the 9.0-magnitude earthquake earlier this month, and tiny traces have been detected in California and Washington DC.

The IAEA lacks data on the temperatures of the spent fuel pools of reactors 1, 3 and 4 at Fukushima.

It has been claimed the plant was storing more uranium than it was designed to hold, and had repeatedly missed mandatory safety checks.

The official death toll in Japan has exceeded 9,400. At least 13,200 people are still missing and 350,000 are in shelters.

Crows cawed overhead as tsunami survivors in devastated towns along Japan's north-east coast buried their dead in makeshift graves en masse today as workers at Fukushima's overheated nuclear plant struggled to cool down the crippled facility.

With supplies of fuel and ice dwindling, officials have abandoned cremation in favor of quick, simple burials in a show of pragmatism over tradition. Some are buried in bare plywood caskets and others in blue plastic tarps, with no time to build proper coffins.

The bodies will be dug up and cremated once crematoriums catch up with the glut, officials assured the families.

In Higashimatsushima in Miyagi prefecture, about 200 miles (320 kilometers) north-east of Tokyo, soldiers lowered bare plywood coffins into the ground, saluting each casket, as families watched from a distance and helicopters occasionally clattered overhead.



Devastation: Family members weep during a burial ceremony for tsunami victims in Higashimatsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture



Grief: A young girl helps a man bury a coffin in Higashimatsushima, north-eastern Japan, left, and Tokiko Abe, who lost her husband in the March 11 tsunami, waits for his coffin to arrive at a temporary mass grave site



Respects: Japanese Self Defence Forces personnel give a salute to the tsunami dead at a burial ceremony in Higashi Matsushima city, Miyagi



Respect: High school baseball players offer silent prayer during the opening ceremony of National High School Championship in Nishinomiya, western Japan

Yesterday firemen connected electric cables to the plant in the hope of restarting cooling systems. Although hundreds of tons of water have been blasted into two of the damaged reactors, smoke and steam continue to pour out.

Of particular concern to the fish-eating nation is the news that radioactive iodine – nearly 128 times the allowed limit – was found in the sea 20 miles from the plant.

Japan's government today said the economic costs of the earthquake and tsunami could reach £190billion.



Salvage: Mai Takada and her grandmother Tokiko search through the rubble of their home

The damage to housing, infrastructure and businesses in north-east Japan could cost between 16 trillion yen and 25 trillion yen (£190billion), according to the Cabinet Office.

That could drag the economic growth rate down by 0.5 percent this year.

The losses figure is considerably higher than other estimates. The World Bank on Monday said damage might reach £144billion. And investment bank Goldman Sachs had estimated quake damage of as much as £123billion.

But if the government's projection proves correct, it would top the overall losses from Hurricane Katrina. The 2005 megastorm that ravaged New Orleans and the surrounding region cost £77billion, according to the Insurance Information Institute.

Utilities have imposed power rationing, many factories remain closed and key rail lines are impassable.

More broadly, the Japanese economy has been lacklustre for two decades, barely managing to eke out weak growth between slowdowns.

It lost its position as world's No. 2 economy to China last year and is saddled with a massive public debt that, at 200 per cent of GDP, is the biggest among industrialized nations.

The government reportedly plans to inject public money into banks to help support lending as companies rebuild. It may finance that from a fund of 11 trillion yen (£83billion) that is still available under a law on emergency support to banks passed after the 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers.

Tokyo also is working on plans to provide low interest loans of up to 10 trillion yen (£75billion) to help companies recover from quake damage, according to a news report.

■ A thief in the town of Kesenuma stole £300,000 – 40million yen – from a bank vault whose doors were smashed open in the tsunami. Police have been told to watch for anyone spending large amounts of money – although there is nowhere left in the area where the thief could spend the cash.

U.S. halts food imports from affected areas of Japan

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration says it will halt imports of dairy products and produce from the area of Japan where a nuclear reactor is leaking radiation.

The FDA says that those foods will be detained at entry and will not be sold to the public. The agency previously said it would just step up screening of those foods.

Other foods imported from Japan, including seafood, will still be sold to the public but screened first for radiation.

Japanese foods make up less than 4 percent of all U.S. imports, and the FDA has said it expects no risk to the U.S. food supply from radiation.



Contamination concerns: Various types of fish are sold at a shop near Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market. The U.S. have halted all dairy imports from Japan and will screen all other foods before allowing entry

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Since 1945 we've had 1000s of nuclear bomb tests around the world, both air and ground bursts. And these were 100s of times worse than what has happened in Japan. I don't doubt contamination has been carried here in the air, but I wouldn't think that it will be as serious as background radiation. Hopefully...

- JonB, Manchester, 23/3/2011 16:18

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