

Questions and Answers for OPA:

March 15, 2011; 8:50 pm

1. Can this happen here?

The events that have occurred in Japan are the result of a combination of highly unlikely natural disasters. These include the fifth largest earthquake in recorded history and the resulting devastating tsunami. It is highly unlikely that a similar event could occur in the United States.

2. I live near a nuclear power plant similar to the ones having trouble in Japan. How can we now be confident that this plant won't experience a similar problem?

U.S. nuclear power plants are built to withstand environmental hazards, including earthquakes and tsunamis. Even those plants that are located outside of areas with extensive seismic activity are designed for safety in the event of such a natural disaster. The NRC requires that safety-significant structures, systems, and components be designed to take into account the most severe natural phenomena historically reported for the site and surrounding area. The NRC is confident that the robust design of these plants makes it highly unlikely that a similar event could occur in the United States.

3. Has this crisis changed your opinion about the safety of U.S. nuclear power plants?

No. The NRC remains confident that the design of U.S. nuclear power plants ensures the continued protection of public health and safety and the environment.

4. With all this happening, how can the NRC continue to approve new nuclear power plants?

It is premature to speculate what, if any, effect the events in Japan will have on the licensing of new nuclear power plants.

5. What is the NRC doing in response to the situation in Japan?

The NRC has taken a number of actions:

- a. Since the beginning of the event, the NRC has continuously manned its Operations Center in Rockville, MD in order to gather and examine all available information as part of the effort to analyze the event and understand its implications both for Japan and the United States.
- b. A team of 11 officials from the NRC with expertise in boiling water nuclear reactors have deployed to Japan as part of a U.S. International Agency for International Development (USAID) team.

- c. The NRC has spoken with its counterpart agency in Japan, offering the assistance of U.S. technical experts.
- d. The NRC is coordinating its actions with other Federal agencies as part of the U.S. government response.

6. What other U.S. agencies are involved, and what are they doing?

The entire federal family is responding to this event. The NRC is closely coordinating its efforts with the White House, DOE, DOD, USAID, and others. The U.S. government is providing whatever support requested by the Japanese government.

7. What else can go wrong?

The NRC is continuously monitoring the developments at the nuclear power plants in Japan. Circumstances are constantly evolving and it would be inappropriate to speculate on how this situation might develop over the coming days.

8. What is the worst-case scenario?

In a nuclear emergency, the most important action is to ensure the core is covered with water to provide cooling to remove any heat from the fuel rods. Without adequate cooling, the fuel rods will melt. Should the final containment structure fail, radiation from these melting fuel rods would be released to the atmosphere and additional protective measures may be necessary depending on factors such as prevailing wind patterns.

9. The United States has troops in Japan and has sent ships to help the relief effort – are they in danger from the radiation?

The NRC is not the appropriate federal agency to answer this question. DOD is better suited to provide information regarding its personnel.

10. Is there a danger of radiation making it to the United States?

In response to nuclear emergencies, the NRC works with other U.S. agencies to monitor radioactive releases and predict their path. The NRC continues to monitor information regarding wind patterns near the Japanese nuclear power plants. Nevertheless, given the thousands of miles between the two countries, Hawaii, Alaska, the U.S. Territories and the U.S. West Coast are not expected to experience any harmful levels of radioactivity.

11. Is the U.S. government tracking the radiation released from the Japanese plants?

Yes, a number of U.S. agencies are involved in monitoring and assessing radiation including EPA, DOE, and NRC. The best source of additional information is the Environmental Protection Agency.

12. Has the government set up radiation monitoring stations to track the release?

The NRC understands that EPA is utilizing its existing nationwide radiation monitoring system, RadNet, to monitor continuously the nation's air and regularly monitors drinking water, milk and precipitation for environmental radiation. EPA has publicly stated its agreement with the NRC's assessment that we do not expect to see radiation at harmful levels reaching the U.S. from damaged Japanese nuclear power plants. Nevertheless, EPA has stated that it plans to work with its federal partners to deploy additional monitoring capabilities to parts of the western U.S. and U.S. territories.

13. The radiation "plume" seems to be going out to sea – what is the danger of it reaching Alaska? Hawaii? The west coast?

See response to Question 10.

14. I live in the Western United States – should I be taking potassium iodide (KI)?

At this time, the NRC does not believe that protective measures are necessary in the United States. We do not expect any U.S. states or territories to experience harmful levels of radioactivity. In the unlikely event that circumstances change, U.S. residents should listen to the protective action decisions of their states and counties. These protective action decisions could include actions such as sheltering, evacuation, or taking potassium iodide. The NRC will provide technical assistance to the states should they request it.

15. Are there other protective measures I should be taking?

At this time, the NRC does not believe that protective measures are necessary in the United States. We do not expect any U.S. states or territories to experience harmful levels of radioactivity. In the unlikely event that circumstances change, U.S. residents should listen to the protective action decisions of their states and counties. These protective action decisions could include actions such as sheltering, evacuation, or taking potassium iodide. The NRC will provide technical assistance to the states should they request it. United States citizens in Japan are encouraged to follow the protective measures recommended by the Japanese government. These measures appear to be consistent with steps the United States would take.

16. What are the risks to my children?

See response to Question 15.

17. My family has planned a vacation to Hawaii/Alaska/Seattle next week – is it safe to go, or should we cancel our plans?

The NRC does not expect that residents of the United States or its territories are at any risk of exposure to harmful levels of radiation resulting from the events in Japan. Any changes to travel are a personal decision. The NRC is unaware of any travel restrictions within the United States or its territories.

18. What are the short-term and long-term effects of exposure to radiation?

The NRC does not expect that residents of the United States or its territories are at any risk of exposure to harmful levels of radiation resulting from the events in Japan.

On a daily basis, people are exposed to naturally occurring sources of radiation, such as from the sun or medical X-rays. The resulting effects are dependent on the strength and type of radiation as well as the duration of exposure.

19. I am traveling to Asia (not Japan). Should I adjust my travel plans to avoid flying through plume or being contaminated once on the ground?

The NRC is not the responsible federal agency to advise U.S. citizens on foreign travel restrictions. That responsibility belongs to the Department of State.

20. What is the official agency to report radiation numbers and what is the public contact?

NRC regulations require nuclear power plants to report any radiation doses detected at the plant that could be harmful to the public. This would include doses that are generated by the plant or by an external source. During an event in the U.S., it is the state's responsibility to provide protective action decisions for public health and safety. For this incident, the Japanese are responsible for reporting the public dose; nevertheless, should radiation doses be detected within the U.S., it would still be the state's responsibility to provide protective action decisions for public health and safety.

21. How many plants are located in seismic areas?

Although we often think of the US as having "active" and "non-active" earthquake zones, earthquakes can actually happen almost anywhere. Seismologists typically separate the US into low, moderate, and high seismicity zones. The NRC requires that every plant be designed for site-specific ground motions that are appropriate for their location. In

addition, the NRC has specified a minimum ground shaking level to which the plants must be designed.

22. Where would I get IOSAT Potassium Iodide if my city should experience fallout from the Japanese nuclear disaster? Is this the right precaution or is there anything else that can be done to protect myself?

We do not expect any U.S. states or territories to experience harmful levels of radioactivity. As such, we do not believe that there is any need for residents of the United States to take potassium iodide. U.S. residents should listen to the protective action decisions by their states and counties. If necessary, protective action decisions could include actions such as sheltering, evacuating, or taking potassium iodide.

Additional information regarding the use of potassium iodide can be found on NRC's webpage at the following link:

<http://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/emerg-preparedness/about-emerg-preparedness/potassium-iodide-use.html>

Since Potassium Iodide is classified as a drug. Additional information is on the Food and Drug Administration's web site. www.fda.gov

23. My loved one is overseas, how do I find out if they are ok?

We are directing public inquiries with regard to concern for loved ones overseas to the State Department, Consular Services at 202-647-7004.