



Fukushima Thread: March 16, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 16, 2011 - 10:16am

[Situation at Japan's troubled nuclear plant 'slightly improved' - IAEA source](#)

The situation at Japan's troubled Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant has slightly improved, although it still raises many questions, a source in the International Atomic Energy Agency has said.

"It seems that Japanese specialists have managed to solve the problem of water supply to reactors and their cooling. At the same time, the situation at the spent fuel storage of the No. 4 reactor remains a concern," the source said.

[UN Nuclear Watchdog Warns of 'Serious Situation' at Japanese Nuclear Plant](#)

Japan faces a "serious situation" at its crippled Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power station, with the three reactor cores containing fuel damaged, Yukiya Amano, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said.

The fuel in storage in units 4, 5 and 6 is exposed and releasing radiation, Amano said in Vienna as he announced he'll hold urgent talks today in Japan.

[Radiation level falls at Japan Fukushima plant-agency](#)

(Reuters) - The level of radiation detected at the Tokyo Electric Power Co Fukushima plant has fallen steadily over the past 12 hours, an official at Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said on Thursday.

[Mixed signs coming out of Japan's nuclear reactors](#)

FUKUSHIMA, JAPAN—Nuclear plant operators trying to avoid complete reactor meltdowns said Thursday that they were close to completing a new power line that might end Japan's crisis, but several ominous signs have also emerged: a surge in radiation levels, unexplained white smoke and spent fuel rods that U.S. officials said could be on the verge of spewing radioactive material.

[U.S. Official: 'Partial Meltdown' at Japanese Plant](#)

WASHINGTON—U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu said Wednesday he believes a "partial meltdown" occurred at the Japanese nuclear-power plant damaged by explosions, malfunctions and radiation leaks following a 9.0-magnitude earthquake.

Mr. Chu added, however, that Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear-power plant has containment systems to prevent leaks and that a partial meltdown doesn't mean the "containment systems will fail."

[Japan's nuclear threat: The danger of information gaps](#)

Naoto Kan pretty much captured what the world has been thinking when he reportedly asked Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) executives "What the hell is going on?" Japan's Kyodo news agency reported that the country's prime minister lashed out at the company's officials over the lack of answers and information about the increasingly dire situation at the Fukushima reactors.

[House Panel Questions Nuclear Regulatory and Energy Chiefs](#)

The House Energy and Commerce committee takes testimony on Wednesday from two witnesses who are suddenly much more prominent because of events in Japan: Steven Chu, the secretary of energy, the chief administration official addressing the crisis involving the Japanese reactors, and Gregory B. Jaczko, the chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which has sent personnel to Japan and is charged with preventing accidents here in the United States.

[Wind and Rain Steer Radiation's Reach](#)

So, how bad could it get?

Experts say it is impossible to forecast how events at Japan's stricken nuclear plant will unfold, whether there will be a meltdown or other crisis at one or more of the reactors that results in a large release of radioactivity into the environment. And even if such a release occurred, the impact in Japan and elsewhere would depend greatly on wind and rain and how long the release lasted.

[Q. and A. on the Nuclear Crisis in Japan](#)

New York Times reporters are answering questions from readers about the continuing nuclear crisis in Japan. Readers asked about media coverage of the crisis, health risks from radiation exposure, problems with the reactors and nuclear waste, the question of human error, comparisons to Chernobyl and the danger of building nuclear power plants in earthquake-prone regions.

[Meltdown fears spark nuclear debate](#)

The earthquake disaster in Japan has rattled international markets and prompted debate over nuclear power as a major energy source.

Events unfolding in the north-east of the country could still culminate in a meltdown. They are shaping up to be the worst catastrophe the nuclear industry has faced since a reactor explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine in 1986 spewed radioactive material across the northern hemisphere.

[Thailand and nuclear: an ongoing debate](#)

Despite strong opposition against the construction of a nuclear power plant in Thailand from many, including Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, related agencies are still pushing forward with the development of the nuclear project, citing the country's growing demand for energy. However, the final decision has yet to be made. Meanwhile, the debate on the issue has continued to be overlooked by every government.

[Despite nuke crisis in Japan, science chief backs opening of BNPP](#)

MANILA, Philippines - Amid the developing nuclear crisis in Japan, Science Secretary Mario Montejo expressed support for the opening of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) but stressed safety precautions should be implemented.

Unlike the power plants in the quake-hit Fukushima nuclear plants in Japan, Montejo said the BNPP was constructed to withstand earthquakes and tsunamis.

[SNAP ANALYSIS-World to warm if Japan panic spreads](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Global warming will intensify if leading carbon emitter China drops the world's most ambitious nuclear power building programme and Germany shuts down its nuclear plants amid panic over Japan's atomic energy crisis.

Wednesday's decision by the world's biggest coal burner and largest climate-warming carbon emitter to suspend approvals for new nuclear plants follows a decision by Europe's biggest carbon emitter Germany to shut seven nuclear plants.

[Obama Nuclear Policy Plan Takes A Hit](#)

The nuclear crisis in Japan is the latest blow to President Obama's effort to craft a national energy policy. Like last year's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, troubles at the Fukushima reactors show there's no large-scale source of energy that's free of risk.

[Nuclear power lobbyists try to limit damage from Japan crisis on Capitol Hill](#)

Nuclear power advocates are waging an intense lobbying campaign on Capitol Hill this week in an attempt to limit the political fallout from the reactor crisis in Japan, which threatens to undermine already shaky plans for expanded nuclear capacity in the United States.

[Japan Disaster Sparks Message Battle Over Nuclear Energy in Washington](#)

Supporters of nuclear energy say it comes down to this: Accept the risk of rare nuclear accidents or face the possibility of catastrophic climate change.

[Japan might turn out less catastrophic than we fear right now](#)

Ezra Klein: Should this change our thinking on nuclear power?

Josh Freed: When nuclear goes wrong, it goes wrong big. Though what that means aside from a lot of white-knuckle days and nights for everyone, we don't know yet. One shouldn't minimize the dangers faced by the workers, but even something as catastrophic as the disaster in Japan might turn out to be a lot less catastrophic in terms of damage and loss of life than we fear right now.

[Backing slowly away from the reactors](#)

For many environmentalists, the decision over nuclear power is a close contest. On the one hand, the consequences of a truly catastrophic nuclear accident are likely to be longer-lasting than even the worst oil spills, and may be more poisonous as well. And we have no truly safe way to store nuclear waste. On the other hand, nuclear power plants are a lot safer than they used to be, and they don't emit any CO₂; countries that rely heavily on nuclear power, like France and Japan, are vastly lower per capita emitters of carbon than countries like the United States and Canada. On the third hand, and this is a rather decisive issue, the insurance industry has rendered its judgment on the safety of nuclear power, and it is decisively negative. No private insurer will guarantee the potential liabilities of building and operating nuclear-power plants, leaving the industry dependent on government guarantees, effectively massive government subsidies, for its existence.

[Threats Come With Virtually Every Source](#)

The worst-case scenario seems impossible until it happens.

Japan is facing that reality as it grapples with a nuclear crisis in the aftermath of a massive earthquake and tsunami.

[Ten reasons why new nuclear was a mistake – even before Fukushima](#)

It's hardly a surprise that building nuclear power stations on seismic fault lines, as Japan has done, turns out to be a foolish thing. In the pause for reflection about the safety of nuclear power that the Fukushima disaster is bound to create, here are ten reasons why it's a mistake to build a new round of nuclear power stations in the UK.

[Japan Says 2nd Reactor May Have Ruptured With Radioactive Release](#)

TOKYO — Japan's nuclear crisis intensified dramatically on Wednesday after the authorities announced that a second reactor unit at the stricken Fukushima Daiichi plant in northeastern Japan may have ruptured and appeared to be releasing radioactive steam.

The break, at the No. 3 reactor unit, worsened the already perilous conditions at the plant, a day after officials said the containment vessel in the No. 2 reactor had also cracked.

Such were the radiation levels above the plant, moreover, that the Japanese military put off a highly unusual plan to dump water from helicopters — a tactic normally employed to combat forest fires — to lower temperatures in a pool containing spent fuel rods that was overheating dangerously..

[Emperor Delivers Rare Address on Nuclear Crisis](#)

TOKYO — Emperor Akihito of Japan, in an unprecedented television address to the nation, said on Wednesday that he was “deeply worried” about the ongoing nuclear crisis at several stricken reactors and asked for people to act with compassion “to overcome these difficult times.”

An official with the Imperial Household Agency said that Akihito had never before delivered a nationally televised address of any kind, not even in the aftermath of the Kobe earthquake in 1995 that killed more than 6,000 people. The address was videotaped.

[Timeline: Japan's unfolding nuclear crisis](#)

(Reuters)- Japan is under global scrutiny over the handling of its nuclear crisis after a huge earthquake crippled several reactors at a nuclear power complex, raising fears of an uncontrolled radiation leak.

Below is a timeline of statements made by Japanese authorities and the complex's owner, Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO), after the quake struck on Friday, the strongest tremor ever recorded in Japan.

[Japan prepares to restart work at nuclear plant](#)

FUKUSHIMA, Japan – Surging radiation levels forced Japan to order emergency workers to temporarily withdraw from its crippled nuclear plant Wednesday, losing time in a desperate operation to cool the overheating reactors — the most urgent crisis from last week's devastating earthquake and tsunami.

[Last Defense at Troubled Reactors: 50 Japanese Workers](#)

A small crew of technicians, braving radiation and fire, became the only people remaining at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station on Tuesday — and perhaps Japan's last chance of preventing a broader nuclear catastrophe.

They crawl through labyrinths of equipment in utter darkness pierced only by their flashlights, listening for periodic explosions as hydrogen gas escaping from crippled reactors ignites on contact with air.

They breathe through uncomfortable respirators or carry heavy oxygen tanks on their backs. They wear white, full-body jumpsuits with snug-fitting hoods that provide scant protection from the invisible radiation sleeting through their bodies.

[Japan reactor design caused GE engineer to quit](#)

(Reuters) - A General Electric Co engineer said he resigned 35 years ago over concern about the safety of a nuclear reactor design used in the now crippled Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan.

Dale Bridenbaugh said the "Mark 1" design had "not yet been designed to withstand the loads" that could be experienced in a large-scale accident.

[Will the nuclear power industry melt down?](#)

The basic equation here is pretty simple. The only way to deal with climate change is by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which in turns means reducing reliance on the burning of fossil fuels. Conservation, improved efficiency, and "green" energy sources like wind farms can help, but not enough to fill the gap without a significant curtailing of living standards. Accordingly, many recent proposals to address future energy needs have assumed that many countries -- including the United States -- would rely more heavily on nuclear power for electricity generation. It's not a complete answer to the climate change problem by any means, but addressing it in a timely fashion would be more difficult if nuclear expansion is eliminated.

[Nuclear power: when the answer becomes the problem](#)

Japan certainly has stricter building regulations than many countries but unfortunately that doesn't mean they are strictly enforced. Some years back many buildings constructed according to these rules were found to be substandard because avaricious construction companies had cut corners.

Nevertheless, there has been widespread complacency that things are OK. For example, last month several Japanese said to Rick that what happened in Christchurch "would not happen in Japan".

[Faith, evidence and tsunamis](#)

When disasters strike, we all jump to conclusions. Big shocks are less likely to change our minds than little ones.

[Jeff Rubin: China Syndrome hits Japan](#)

Just as many countries were looking for nuclear power to play a growing role in meeting their future energy needs, the world is suddenly looking at the biggest nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

[The fallout from the crisis in Japan will rewrite climate change debate](#)

THE Japan crisis is likely to be a severe setback for the nuclear industry. It will create a lot of soul-searching about an industry promoted as green, safe and efficient, the perfect model for reducing greenhouse gas emissions because it emits virtually no carbon dioxide. We can also expect more heat on uranium stocks.

[Fears aside, our energy thirst is insatiable](#)

If Japan - smart and efficient, conscientious to the point of being anal, the designated driver of the industrialized world - can't be counted on for nuclear safety, where does that leave us hold-my-beer-and-watch-this Canadians? The sight of cooling towers leaves us chilled.

OK then, asks UVic climatologist Andrew Weaver, where does the world expect to get its power, and at what cost? Hydro dams, coal-fired plants, the Alberta oilsands all take a toll on the environment.

"We can't get energy without a footprint."



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