



## Fukushima Thread: March 17, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 17, 2011 - 10:12am

### [High Radiation Severely Hinders Emergency Work to Cool Japanese Plant](#)

TOKYO — Amid widening alarm in the United States and elsewhere about Japan's nuclear crisis, military fire trucks began spraying cooling water on spent fuel rods at the country's stricken nuclear power station on Thursday, but later suspended the operation, the NHK broadcaster said.

The development came as the authorities reached for ever more desperate and unconventional methods to cool damaged reactors, deploying helicopters and water cannons in a race to prevent perilous overheating in the spent rods.

Moments before the military began spraying, police in water cannon trucks had been forced back by high levels of radiation in the same area, but it was not immediately clear why the military fire trucks had suspended their operation. Police had been attempting to get within 50 yards of the No. 3 reactor. The full impact of the tactic was not immediately clear.

### [Trapped in the radiation zone, and no help in sight](#)

AN AWFUL realisation is setting in for those trapped in the vicinity of the crippled Fukushima nuclear complex: people are afraid to help them.

Residents describe spooky scenes of municipal cars driving down near-empty streets telling people to stay indoors, but they have seen few other signs of outside help.

Aid agencies are reluctant to get too close to the plant. Shelters set up in the greater Fukushima area for "radiation refugees" have little food, in part because nobody wants to deliver to an area that might be contaminated. And with little or no petrol available, not everyone who wants to leave can get out.

### [Radiation fear hits Tokyo, prompting migration](#)

OSAKA (Japan): Earthquake-induced power cuts, food shortages, and now the intense fear of deadly nuclear radiation has gripped Tokyo, prompting a migration of people 500 kilometres away to Osaka, the third-largest city in Japan.

People in a panicked state are fleeing Tokyo as they worry about the spread of radiation

from overheating nuclear reactors in Fukushima, northern Japan, hit hard by the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami on March 11.

### [U.S. working to move citizens from affected areas in Japan](#)

Washington (CNN) -- The State Department announced late Wednesday that it has approved the departure of family members of U.S. government personnel from certain areas of Japan in the aftermath of the earthquake, the tsunami and the nuclear power plant crisis.

Charter flights will be made available to the approximately 600 people, according to Under Secretary of State Patrick Kennedy.

### [Long Pause for Japanese Industry Raises Concerns About Supply Chain](#)

Much of Japan's industry seemed to remain in a state of suspension Wednesday, as the devastation from an earthquake and tsunami, combined with fear and uncertainty over the nuclear calamity, made it difficult for corporate Japan to think about business as usual.

And that has left many overseas customers and trading partners in something of an information vacuum, unsure how soon the effects of any supply-chain disruptions would make themselves felt — and how long they might last.

### [Confusion in a Crisis: Just How High are Japan's Radiation Risks?](#)

The ongoing struggle to snuff out the nuclear crisis came amid mounting confusion about key elements of risk now in play. At a hearing in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Gregory Jaczko, called radiation levels at one of the plant's units "extremely high." He added that "for a comparable situation in the United States we would recommend evacuation for a much larger radius than is currently being provided in Japan." And he said that his information suggested that there was no water left in the pool containing spent fuel rods in reactor Unit 4, an assertion which if true makes a significant release of radioactive gases from the burning fuel rods stored there much more likely.

### [The Crisis in Japan: A Hunger for Information](#)

The crisis at Fukushima has been aggravated by the sparse, often contradictory information issued by the government and Tepco, revealing what at times appears to be their own uncertainty about what's happening in the reactors.

### [Fukushima nuclear plant owner falsified inspection records](#)

THE Japanese owner of the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant falsified safety data and "dishonestly" tried to cover up problems there.

Tokyo Electric Power Co injected air into the containment vessel of Fukushima reactor No 1 to artificially "lower the leak rate". When caught, the company expressed its "sincere apologies for conducting dishonest practices".

### [EU commissioner: Japanese disaster in 'hands of God'](#)

EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - The nuclear crisis in Japan is now in the "hands of God", the EU's energy commissioner, Guenther Oettinger, has said, rattling financial markets.

Speaking to the European Parliament's environment committee on Wednesday (16 March), Oettinger expressed surprise at the "incredible makeshift" methods being used by Japanese technicians to prevent further disaster at the Fukushima power plant. "The site is effectively out of control," the German commissioner told MEPs, a day after he described Japan as facing an "apocalypse".

### [Patience wears thin at Tepco's bungling](#)

When the leader of a country asks the company fighting to prevent a nuclear catastrophe "what the hell is going on?", you know he has departed from the script.

Naoto Kan on Tuesday lost his temper with Tokyo Electric Power Company, the operator of the explosion-prone Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station.

He could not understand why he had not been told for a whole hour about the first explosion at the plant in the early hours of Saturday morning.

#### USEFUL LINKS:

Best source for the timely news: [NHK Feed](#) (thanks, Rethin)

*(Any other suggestions for links that should be featured here?)*



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