



NUCLEAR POWER PLANT CONCERNS – JAPAN EARTHQUAKE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the impact of the event in Japan on the United States?

At this time, there is no indication that materials from the incidents in Japan will have any significant radiological effect on the United States.

What if the situation changes? How will I be informed of possible exposure?

Federal and state agencies are actively monitoring the situation. These agencies utilize a number of redundant monitoring systems capable of detecting any significant elevation in radiation levels. The North Dakota Department of Health has a monitoring system that would detect any unusual levels of radiation. State officials will notify the public through the media and other channels of communications should the situation change.

What are the health effects of exposure to radiation?

Radiation can affect the body in a number of ways, and the negative health consequences of exposure may not be seen for many years. These negative health effects can range from mild effects, such as skin reddening, to serious effects such as cancer and death, depending upon the amount of radiation absorbed by the body (the dose), the type of radiation, the route of exposure and the length of time a person is exposed. Exposure to very large doses of radiation may cause death within a few days or months. Exposure to lower doses of radiation may lead to an increased risk of developing cancer or other negative health effects.

Does North Dakota have a plan in place to respond to a radiological emergency?

The North Dakota Department of Health works closely with the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services and other state agencies during emergencies. All-hazards response plans, including plans for radiation events, have been developed. If it would ever become necessary, North Dakota could put in a request for potassium iodide from the federal government's strategic national stockpile.

Should people in North Dakota be taking potassium iodide (KI)?

No. Potassium iodide (KI) tablets are not being recommended for people in the United States due to the radiation releases in Japan. Potassium iodide can present a danger to people with allergies to iodine or shellfish, those with certain skin disorders, or those with thyroid problems. Side effects can include nausea, intestinal upset, rashes, inflammation of the salivary glands, and possible severe allergic reactions. Dosages can vary and should only be taken as prescribed by a medical professional.

Should I be concerned about radiation in food imported from Japan?

At this time, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is not concerned with imported foods that have already reached the U.S. that are in distribution. The FDA is collecting information on all FDA-regulated food products exported to the U.S. from Japan, including where they were grown, harvested, or manufactured, so they can further evaluate whether, in the future, they may pose a risk to consumers in the U.S. FDA will be developing a monitoring

strategy that may include increased and targeted product sampling at the border. The great quantity of water in the Pacific Ocean rapidly and effectively dilutes radioactive material, so fish and seafood are likely to be unaffected. However, FDA is taking all steps to evaluate and measure any contamination in fish being imported to the U.S. At this time, models do not indicate that significant amounts of radiation will reach the U.S. coast or affect U.S. fishing waters.

Is it true that we are all exposed to radiation daily?

Yes. It is important to understand that people are exposed to natural radiation on a daily basis. The radiation comes from the sun, from natural materials found in the ground, water and air, from our televisions, cell phones and computers, and from every structure around us. Levels of exposure to natural radiation depend on the local geology and elevation.

Does North Dakota have any nuclear power plants?

No, there are no nuclear power plants in North Dakota. The closest nuclear power plants are in Minnesota.

How can I protect myself?

It is important to remember that according to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, there is no risk to anyone in the United States at this time. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has permanent radiation monitoring stations on the West Coast and the EPA is keeping federal agencies informed. Keep yourself and your family informed by obtaining accurate information. Know where to get accurate information, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, rather than unverified websites where inaccurate information may spread quickly.

All residents should prepare a basic emergency kit in order to be prepared for any kind of disaster. The kit should include basic items such as water, cash and important documents, a flashlight, prescription medication, toiletries, food, clothes, a first aid kit, a radio and tools.

It also is vital that families put together an emergency plan. More information about how you can be prepared for emergencies is available at <http://www.ready.gov/>.

More Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation/>

Environmental Protection Agency – <http://www.epa.gov/radiation/>

Nuclear Regulatory Commission – <http://www.nrc.gov/>