

## **NRC COMPLICIT IN RADIATION EXPOSURE COVER-UP IN JAPAN**

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A confidential assessment written by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission strongly indicates knowledge that Japan's Daiichi nuclear reactors had experienced core fuel meltdown within the first few days after a devastating tsunami. By keeping its assessment confidential, the NRC allowed the Japanese government to remain silent about the fuel meltdowns. The Japanese government failed to take adequate steps to evacuate the people surrounding Fukushima allowing them to receive high levels of radiation.

The NY Times reports (8/09/2011) that the mayor of a town near Fukushima believes "the withholding of information was akin to murder." Many residents view denying the facts about the nuclear disaster as part of "an official campaign to play down the scope of the accident and the potential health risks." [1]

Although the NRC report was written 15 days after the earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan 3/11/2011, this information was not made formally available under the Freedom of Information Act until 8/3/2011, a full five months after these events.

The NRC knew that damaged fuel may have slumped to the bottom of the reactor core in Units 1, 2, and 3. The NRC knew the secondary containment for Unit 1 was severely damaged by a hydrogen explosion.

The NRC confidential assessment stated the following conditions existed at the Fukushima Japan Daiichi Nuclear Reactor Units:

- failed safety and backup systems
- hydrogen explosions,
- destroyed secondary containments,
- failed pumps and spray nozzles clogged with salt,
- reactor cores filling with salt,
- reactor water in turbine building basements,
- failure of pump seals,
- unknown temperatures levels in reactor cores,
- rising temperatures in spent fuel pools filled with roof debris,
- earthquake concerns about the weight of the water being pumped into the containment structures.

By its actions, the NRC delayed appropriate international response to the fuel meltdowns. For example, two days after the tsunami hit the reactors, the British government began to co-ordinate with nuclear companies to downplay events to prevent undermining public support for nuclear power.[2]

It would appear that the nuclear industry has a vested interest in withholding information from the public that might threaten further development of nuclear facilities. The NRC still has not provided to the public the documents that accompany the report. It was known that the type of nuclear reactors manufactured by General Electric used at Fukushima had serious technical difficulties. [3]

Westinghouse and General Electric build and supply nuclear reactors. Westinghouse owns CBS and General Electric owns NBC and CNBC. They have a vested interest in limiting news about nuclear plants and radioactive contamination.[4]

For making its technical recommendations, the NRC report was relying on conflicting information from TEPCO, the Japanese operator, the Japanese Industrial Forum (JAIF), Nuclear & Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), and General Electric Hitachi Nuclear Energy (GEH).

On June 9, 2011, a report by the Japanese government described that a "melt-through" had taken place and was "far worse than a core meltdown" and "the worst possibility in a nuclear accident." [5]

It is TEPCO's position that constructing an underground barrier to stop the molten radioactive fuel from spreading into the groundwater would cost too much money and reduce profits.[6]

To lessen public anxiety, Japan raised the limit for acceptable exposure to radiation for infants and children to twice the former standard. The allowable limits in food have been increased to 20 times the international standards for nuclear waste limits.[7]

Secrecy and cover up is not an appropriate response to a national disaster. Protecting political power and nuclear industry profits has been shown to have devastating consequences for Fukushima residents and the rest of the world.

The NRC Confidential Assessment was obtained by Citizen Action from a 4/062011 FOIA request may be viewed on the Citizen Action website at [www.radfree.nm.org](http://www.radfree.nm.org)

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[1] [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/world/asia/09japan.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/world/asia/09japan.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)

[2] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/jun/30/british-government-plan-play-down-fukushima>

[3] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/06/us-nuclear-regulators-doubts\\_n\\_845819.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/06/us-nuclear-regulators-doubts_n_845819.html)

[4] <http://www.whoownsthenews.com/>

[5] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/8565020/Nuclear-fuel-has-melted-through-base-of-Fukushima-plant.html>

[6] <http://blog.alexanderhiggins.com/2011/06/22/fukushima-nuclear-fuel-leaking-groundwater-tepco-barrier-expensive-hurt-stock-price-29881/>

[7] <http://www.nuc.berkeley.edu/node/4925>