

Japan nuclear reactor coverage is a sound science meltdown

By ACSH Staff — March 14, 2011

In the wake of a back-to-back 9.0 earthquake and tsunami, Japan is working tirelessly to rescue thousands of missing and injured residents and repair its ravaged neighborhoods. Now, many are also worrying over the potential for radiation emission from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant reactors that experienced cooling and pressure problems as a result of the natural disaster. The threat of radiation release, however, has been [aggrandized by anti-nuclear activists](#) ^[1] who are exploiting the situation to satisfy their own political wons, which is mainly to eliminate the use of nuclear power in the U.S.

While the tragedy of these natural disasters is being clouded by the press and anti-nuke propaganists who toss around words like “meltdown” and warn of “another Chernobyl,” many experts are beginning to conclude that the radiation emissions are more comparable to the harmless Three Mile Island radiation leak of 1979.

An [article](#) ^[2] from *The Wall Street Journal* summarizes that unlike the 1986 reactor disaster in Chernobyl — whose system was replete with hazardous flaws and serious operator errors — Japan’s plants have engineered a solution to many of these problems that will also be resolved in the next generation of nuclear reactors:

What the Japanese earthquake has proved is that even the oldest containment structures can withstand the impact of one of the largest earthquakes in recorded history. The problem has been with the electrical pumps required to operate the cooling system. It would be tragic if the result of the Japanese accident were to prevent development of Generation III reactors, which eliminate this design flaw ...

If a meltdown does occur in Japan, it will be a disaster for the Tokyo Electric Power Company but not for the general public. Whatever steam releases occur will have a negligible impact. Researchers have spent 30 years trying to find health effects from the steam releases at Three Mile Island and have come up with nothing. With all the death, devastation and disease now threatening tens of thousands in Japan, it is trivializing and almost obscene to spend so much time worrying about damage to a nuclear reactor.

ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan agrees and argues that the news should focus on the real tragedies and public health threats. “Thousands of Japanese residents have been flooded out of their homes and trapped without adequate food or clean water. These unsanitary conditions could lead to epidemics of infectious disease. When you have both a once-in-a-lifetime earthquake and tsunami, the fact that the plants, although damaged, have not released significant levels of radiation is remarkable and a testament to the engineering and safety of the nuclear plants.”

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross adds that the anti-nuclear energy activists trying to exert pressure to stunt the progression of nuclear power "do not really care about nuclear safety. Eliminating nuclear power as a source of energy is the wrong answer from any point of view. Nuclear power offers the [safest and cleanest source of energy](#) [3] on earth."

ACSH will update our readers as we continue to monitor the science on the Japanese nuclear reactors.

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[2] <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704893604576198421680697248.html>

[3] http://www.acsh.org/publications/pubid.1790/pub_detail.asp