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## **EVENT IN JAPAN AND MONITORING IN OREGON:**

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

#### **Q. Are there radiological dangers in Oregon due to the radiation release in Japan?**

A. No. We are about 5,000 miles away from Japan and based on the extent and nature of the radiation release airborne particles are not expected to reach us in an amount that would increase risk of illness. There is no indication at this time that there is any health risk to Oregonians from this event.

#### **Q. What happened at the nuclear facility in Japan?**

A. The major earthquake damaged nuclear facilities in Japan. In response, Japanese engineers are taking emergency measures to prevent a serious release of radioactive materials. At this time, there are no health risks for Oregonians.

#### **Q. How does this event differ from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown event in 1986?**

A. This event is different from what took place in Chernobyl. Unlike Chernobyl, there has been no catastrophic failure.

#### **Q. Are Oregonians on the coast at greater risk than people inland?**

A. No. The amount of radiation released into the atmosphere in Japan poses a risk to those close to the affected plant. The size of the release does not pose a threat to Oregonians anywhere in the state. There are no current health concerns for any Oregonians on the coast or inland.

#### **Q. Are Oregon officials currently monitoring radiation levels in the air in Oregon?**

A. Yes. Radiation levels have been continuously and routinely monitored by Oregon Public Health and EPA for 25 years. Oregon Public Health posts the daily general radiation levels at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/DailyAirMonitoring.aspx>. If the situation in Japan worsens and the potential risk to Oregonians changes, public health officials will inform the public.

#### **Q. Is radiation from the damaged Japanese plant reaching the U.S.?**

A. Detailed analyses of the radiation air monitor filters have detected trace amounts of iodine 131 and other isotopes, which likely came from the Japanese disaster. The estimated biological effect from the trace amounts of radiation currently detected in Oregon from the events in Japan is about 160 nrem per day. To put this into perspective, one would need to be exposed to this level all day, everyday for more than 100 years, to equal the exposure from ONE chest X-ray.

#### **Q. I have heard there is radiation in our rainwater. Why?**

Trace amounts of radiation linked to the power plant event in Japan have been detected in the air. When it rains or snows, precipitation will also pick up small amounts of this material. The Public Health Division and the EPA are tracking levels of radiation in Oregon air and rainwater.

#### **Q. Is it safe to be out in the rain?**

Yes. The trace amounts of radiation in air and precipitation samples pose minimal risk to the health of Oregonians. The small amounts of radiation that have come to Oregon due to the events in Japan remain well below the typical background levels we see every day from natural sources, such as minerals and sunlight.

#### **Q. What is Potassium Iodide?**

A. Potassium Iodide (KI) is an iodine supplement that is available over the counter, such as ThyroSafe and ThyroShield. KI is used to block the uptake of radioactive iodine in the body for people close to the radioactive release.



**Q. Do I need to take KI to protect against radiation exposure?**

A. No. People exposed to high levels of radioactive iodine, for instance, those who live a short distance from a large radiation release, may need to take Potassium iodide to lessen the long-term risk of thyroid disease. Based on the current situation in Japan, there is no need for people in Oregon to take this medication. In addition, it is **not** expected that we will reach a point where it is needed. Some people, particularly those with an allergy to iodine, should not take this medicine. Also, those who have chronic kidney disease should be very cautious about taking this medicine, since it could lead to dangerous rises in blood potassium levels. It should also be used with caution by pregnant women, as higher than recommended doses can affect fetal thyroid growth.

**Q. Are there any protective measures I should currently take?**

A. No, not given our current situation. If the potential risk to Oregonians changes, local Oregon officials will inform you of the appropriate precautionary procedures.

**Q. Is our milk safe to drink?**

A. Yes. A sample of Oregon milk taken on March 29 was found to have no detectable levels of radiation. It is safe to drink.

**Q. How do I get more information?**

A. Monitor the Oregon Public Health website at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/index.aspx>.

