

No Health Risk to Oregon from Japanese Radiation Events

For More Information: State Resources

Oregon Health Authority,
Information on Radiation Protection
HOTLINE: 1-877-290-6767
EMAIL: RPS.OHA@state.or.us

Oregon Public Health Current Hazards:
<http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/index.aspx>

Radiation Protection Service:
<http://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/OEPH/RPS>

Oregon Poison Center:
1-800-222-1222

Federal Resources

RadNet
www.epa.gov/narel/radnet/

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

Radiation Emergency Assistance
Center/Training Site (REAC/TS):
1-865-576-3131
<http://www.orau.gov/reacts/>

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

U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services Radiation Event Medical
Management:
<http://remm.nlm.gov>



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Introduction

The Oregon Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program and the Radiation Protection Services are closely monitoring the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan that was affected by the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

No Health Risk to Oregon

Given the nearly 5,000 miles between Japan and the U.S., and the extent and nature of the radiation release, the health risk in Oregon due to radiation released from this event is extremely minimal.

Analysis of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air monitor data in Portland has detected trace levels of iodine 131 and cesium 137, forms of radiation likely connected with Japan's nuclear emergency. Trace levels were expected on the U.S. West Coast as a result of events in Japan. Trace amounts of radiation are far lower than levels that would be a health concern; a person would need to be exposed to this level all day, everyday, for over 100 years to equal the amount of radiation received from **one** chest x-ray. Iodine 131 and cesium 137 are subsets of the gross beta measurements that are posted everyday on the Oregon Public Health website:
<http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/CurrentHazards/Pages/DailyAirMonitoring.aspx>.

How safety is monitored: air detectors

The EPA has a network of air monitoring stations, called RadNet, throughout the country that continuously monitor for the presence of radiation. RadNet is designed to provide immediate and long-term information about radiation to protect public health and the environment. There are two monitoring stations in Oregon: one in Portland and one in Corvallis.

How the radiation monitoring works

EPA's nationwide monitoring system, RadNet, continuously monitors the nation's air and is capable of detecting even very small increases in radiation levels. The information is updated and recorded hourly. For more information about RADNET visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/narel/radnet>. Oregon Public Health's Radiation Protection Services Program also monitors the air and precipitation coming into Oregon.

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Radiation information

Radiation is a form of energy that comes from a source and can travel through space. Radiation is naturally present in our environment. In addition, radiation can be produced artificially, as in medical x-rays. For Oregon, the radiation levels haven't gone above this background level since the earthquake in Japan. Radioactive materials released from the nuclear power plant in Japan include cesium, iodine and other compounds. Iodine and cesium can travel longer distances. However it is unlikely that the amount of these materials reaching Oregon will pose a health risk.

Potassium Iodide (KI)

People exposed to high levels of radioactive iodine, for example 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 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.

Overall outlook

Radiation levels that would present a health risk are **not** expected to reach Oregon. Japan is thousands of miles away.

Other partners

Public health officials are also in contact with our federal partners including the EPA.

Ongoing work

Oregon Public Health will continue its monitoring work and will update the public if there are any changes.

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For more information about Oregon Public health Radiation Protection Services:

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/OEPH/RPS/Pages/index.aspx>

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Call 971-673-1244