

## The Japanese Nuclear Crisis: What it Means for Alaska

Joe McLaughlin, MD, MPH  
State Epidemiologist  
Alaska Division of Public Health



Chris Laborde  
Preparedness Program Manager  
Alaska Division of Public Health



### Implications for Alaska

- There is no immediate or anticipated threat for harmful levels of radiation to reach Alaska
- Alaska's seafood is unlikely to be affected
- This is an important reminder that all Alaskans should assemble a home emergency kit and a family response plan

### Public Health Response to a Radiation Emergency

- Inform
- Protect the public from radiation exposure
  - Shelter-in-place and/or evacuation
  - Distribution of radiation medications (e.g., KI, DTPA, etc.)
  - Restrict consumption of contaminated food
- Decrease psychological effects of radiation exposure
- Long-term follow-up for exposed persons
  - Case identification and tracking (registry)
  - Access to care

### DHSS Communication Response

- Responded to media requests
- Issued press releases and messages through social media (e.g., Facebook and Twitter)
- Issued an *Epidemiology Bulletin*
- Principal messages
  - No anticipated threat to the health of Alaskans
  - Alaskans should not be taking potassium iodide
  - Monitoring
  - Communicating with local, state, and federal partners
  - Important reminder that all Alaskans should be prepared

### What can Alaskans do to be prepared for an emergency?

- Create a home emergency supply kit
  - Food with a long shelf life, water, change of clothes, plastic bags, bedding, radio, medicines, toiletries, flashlight, batteries, telephone, duct tape, heavy plastic, cash, important documents...
- Create a vehicle emergency supply kit
- Develop a family response plan
- Practice

### Alaska Radiation Monitoring

- Alaska's monitoring stations continue to show normal background levels of radiation
- 5 EPA monitoring stations
  - Currently reporting: Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau (γ)
  - Soon to be reporting: Dutch Harbor, Juneau (β), Nome
- If levels were to rise substantially, we would measure specific isotopes to determine if steps are needed to protect the public's health
- Data are available at the DHSS homepage:  
[www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us)

### Food Supply

- FDA is closely monitoring
  - Increased and targeted product sampling at the border
  - <4% of US imported foods come from Japan
- Current models indicate that US fishing waters will remain safe
  - “The great quantity of water in the Pacific Ocean rapidly and effectively dilutes radioactive material, so fish and seafood are likely to be unaffected” FDA

Exposure (rem)	Notes and Effects
0.00008	Amount of radiation reported in Tokyo on March 15
0.0016	Avg. amount of radiation absorbed per person per day
0.04	Chest x-ray
0.6	Avg. amount of radiation absorbed per person per year
1.4	Gastrointestinal series
40	Maximum radiation reported at the main gate of Fukushima Daiichi power plant (March 15)
5-50	Fetus/embryo: slightly increased risk of malformations, growth and IQ impacts, failure to implant Children/adults: changes in blood chemistry (e.g., WBC)
50-90	Nausea, fatigue, vomiting, hair loss, diarrhea

### Availability of Radiation Medications

- Radiation medications are included in the Strategic National Stockpile
  - Potassium iodide, Prussian blue, DTPA
  - Antiemetics, Neupogen, antibiotics
- CDC will only deploy if there is a “credible threat”
- “No public health risks are expected in the United States” US DHHS

### Summary

- There is no anticipated threat of harmful radiation exposure to Alaskans at this time
- Alaska’s seafood is unlikely to be affected
- All Alaskans should be prepared for disasters
- More information is available at [www.hss.state.ak.us](http://www.hss.state.ak.us)