

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>New Policy in Maryland Drivers with no DUIs in Maryland may be eligible for \$9 per week car insurance.</p> | | <p>SHOCKING: \$9 Car Insurance in MD Silver Spring: Mom discovers \$9 car insurance trick. Auto Insurers are SCARED you will learn this secret. <small>ifestyleJournal.com</small></p> |
|--|--|--|--|

Japan doubles Fukushima radiation leak estimate

Inquiry launched into nuclear disaster as studies reveal contamination more widely spread than first thought

Justin McCurry in Tokyo
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 7 June 2011 13.34 BST
[Article history](#)



Japan has been criticised for its handling of the Fukushima disaster, the world's worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986. Photograph: AP

The amount of radiation released by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in the days after the 11 March tsunami could have been more than double that originally estimated by its operator, Japan's nuclear safety agency has said.

The revelation has raised fears that the situation at the plant, where fuel in three reactors suffered meltdown, was more serious than government officials have acknowledged.

In another development that is expected to add to criticism of Japan's handling of the crisis, the agency said molten nuclear fuel dropped to the bottom of the pressure vessel in the No 1 reactor within five hours of the accident, 10 hours earlier than previously thought.

By the end of last week, radiation levels inside the reactor had risen to 4,000 millisieverts per hour, the highest atmospheric reading inside the plant since the disaster.

The agency also speculated that the meltdown in another reactor had been faster than initially estimated by the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric

Tweet 48

Share 103

A larger | smaller

World news
Japan disaster · Japan

Environment
Nuclear power · Energy

More news

More on this story



[Animals roam free near Fukushima plant – video](#)

See also

16 Mar 2011
[Lessons for Japan from the Chernobyl catastrophe](#)

13 May 2011
[Fukushima radiation fails to deter dairy farmers - video](#)

25 Mar 2011
[Japanese nuclear officials fear crack in reactor core](#)

16 Mar 2011
[Japan nuclear crisis: fire in fuel pools 'would raise radiation exposure'](#)

Power (Tepco).

It is not clear whether the revised account of the accident, the world's worst since Chernobyl in 1986, would have prompted Tepco to respond differently at the time.

But it is expected to raise questions about the ability of Japan's nuclear authorities to provide accurate information to the public.

According to the latest estimates, 770,000 terabequerels – about 20% as much as the official estimate for Chernobyl – of radiation seeped from the plant in the week after the tsunami, more than double the initial estimate of 370,000.

In a possible sign that the contamination is more widespread than previously thought, a university researcher said at the weekend a small amount of plutonium had been identified a mile from the front gate of the Fukushima plant.

It is the first time plutonium thought to have originated from the complex has been detected in soil outside its grounds.

However, Masayoshi Yamamoto, a professor at Kanazawa University, said the level of plutonium in the sample was lower than average levels observed in Japan after nuclear weapons tests conducted overseas.

The release of findings coincided with the start of an investigation on Tuesday into the accident by a 10-member panel.

Last week, a fact-finding team from the International Atomic Energy Agency criticised Tepco for failing to acknowledge the risk to the plant from a tsunami, despite warnings from government experts and its own scientists.

The panel, led by Yotaro Hatamura, a human error expert from Tokyo University, will issue an interim report by the end of the year. "I think it is a mistake to consider [the plant] safe," he said.

The prime minister, Naoto Kan, said he would be willing to undergo questioning in the hope that the report "stands up to scrutiny from around the world".

 [Printable version](#)  [Send to a friend](#)  [Share](#)  [Clip](#)  [Contact us](#)  [Article history](#)

AdChoices 

cross fingers

fight global warming.com

  

Ads by Google

[New LG Super LED Monitors](#)
SUPER Slim Monitors From LG The Ultimate Slimness & Style
www.lg.com/monitors

Related information

[World news](#)

[Japan disaster](#) · [Japan](#)

[Environment](#)

[Nuclear power](#) · [Energy](#)



[Japan nuclear crisis and tsunami - Tuesday 15 March](#)

15 Mar 2011

Radiation around Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant has reached levels damaging to health, raising fears of more leaks

31 May 2011

[Japanese nuclear plant hit by explosion and oil spill](#)

11 May 2011

[The dairy farmers who returned to Fukushima's fallout path](#)

29 Mar 2011

[Q&A: Plutonium detected at Fukushima](#)

16 Mar 2011

[Japan nuclear emergency: a timeline of the crisis](#)



[Japan nuclear crisis puts UK public off new power stations](#)

22 Mar 2011

Support for new nuclear in UK falls by 12% following near-meltdown at Fukushima in Japan, Friends of the Earth finds

Hot topics

[E coli](#)

[Yemen](#)

[Libya](#)

[Apple WWDC](#)

[E3](#)