



MEDIA RELEASE

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Radioactive water dumped from Fukushima far from harmless

Beyond Nuclear decries misleading reports about decontamination

TAKOMA PARK, MD, September 14, 2015 — Reports in the press today that “formerly contaminated” groundwater has been dumped from the stricken Fukushima nuclear site in Japan into the ocean are grossly misleading, says an expert at Beyond Nuclear, a national NGO of record on the dangers of nuclear energy. Reports say 230,000 gallons of water have been dumped so far.

“This is another attempt to whitewash the enormous radioactive waste problem at the site by claiming to have discharged ‘purified’ radioactive water into the sea,” said Kevin Kamps, radioactive waste watchdog at Beyond Nuclear. “It is simply not possible to remove or ‘decontaminate’ radioactive hydrogen, or tritium, from radioactive waste water.

“A more accurate description would have been ‘permissible’ radioactive levels,” Kamps added. “But ‘permissible’ does not mean safe, and it certainly does not mean ‘previously contaminated,’ which implies radioactive isotopes have been fully removed.”

When dumping the water Monday, TEPCO, the site operator, claimed to have “purified” it of cesium and strontium but avoided addressing the tritium problem which the company simply characterized as “less harmful.”

“Downplaying the harmfulness of tritium is contradicted by the facts,” Kamps said. An Oak Ridge National Lab health physicist admitted to Beyond Nuclear Board of Directors Member, Kay Drey, in St. Louis, that “tritium is no big deal. All it can do is destroy a DNA molecule.”

“It is that destruction of human DNA, and other vital building blocks of life, that can lead to cancer, birth defects, and genetic damage,” Kamps said.

The radioactive groundwater being dumped was pumped up from around the stricken Fukushima reactor buildings. But there is also a growing number of storage tanks on site that contain highly radioactive contaminated water used to cool the melted reactor cores. At least 700,000 tons — equivalent to 188 million gallons — of this highly radioactively contaminated water has reportedly built up on site. TEPCO is fast running

out of space and it has been feared the radioactive content of these already leaking tanks might also deliberately be dumped into the ocean.

“Tritium is harmful for more than 120 years,” Kamps said. “Discharging it into the marine environment does not mean there will be a negligible effect. The tritium will not dilute, it will bio-accumulate in the food chain. Fisherman are right to fear for their livelihood.”

Dale Klein, a former chairman at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, was widely quoted in the coverage of the ocean dumping. Klein took the revolving door straight into the nuclear industry after retiring from the commission. He now works for TEPCO, heading a committee that is described as “created to ensure the nuclear meltdown is never repeated.”

“The acceptance of such absurdities — that radioactive water can be made clean or that we can ever ‘ensure’ no future reactor meltdown — are yet more examples of a seeming willingness to swallow pro-nuclear propaganda without the slightest question,” Kamps concluded.

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Beyond Nuclear aims to educate and activate the public about the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons and the need to abandon both to safeguard our future. Beyond Nuclear advocates for an energy future that is sustainable, benign and democratic. The Beyond Nuclear team works with diverse partners and allies to provide the public, government officials, and the media with the critical information necessary to move humanity toward a world beyond nuclear. Beyond Nuclear: 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 400, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Info@beyondnuclear.org. www.beyondnuclear.org.