

Japan: Mach 11 knocked out most radiation monitoring systems

Monday 30 May 2011, by [Jiji Press](#), [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 29 May 2011).

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Power outages, downed communication lines knocked out most radiation monitoring systems in disaster areas

Most radiation monitoring systems in Fukushima, Miyagi and Ibaraki prefectures broke down temporarily after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, preventing local authorities from gauging the ensuing nuclear crisis, prefectural officials said.

Monitoring systems in other prefectures with nuclear power plants also face similar risks of a breakdown, requiring an urgent review, analysts say.

Twenty-two of the 23 round-the-clock radiation monitors installed around the crisis-hit Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant and at the nearby Fukushima No. 2 nuclear complex stopped sending data to the prefectural monitoring center about three hours after the quake, officials said.

While some monitors were broken by the magnitude 9.0 temblor or were washed away by tsunami, infrastructure disruptions such as downed communication lines and electricity outages were the major causes of the breakdown, one official said.

Although some of the monitors are equipped with satellite links as a backup, they also failed to send data, most likely because their antennas were damaged in the disaster, the officials said.

In Miyagi Prefecture, where the Onagawa nuclear power plant is located, four out of seven monitors broke down after being hit by tsunami.

The remaining three Å\ which were positioned in high places Å\ were able to transmit data through backup satellite connections, but the function was lost about five hours after the quake, officials said.

In Ibaraki, more than 40 monitors are set around the Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant and nearby nuclear facilities. Emergency batteries activated amid power outages but their power ran out about 20 hours later, halting monitoring for three hours until electricity was restored in the area.

"It is a general rule that radiation levels near the facilities are always monitored. It is a problem that all the equipment broke down," said an official of the prefecture's radiation monitoring center.

Kyodo, May 29, 2011

Tokyo Electric Discloses Detailed Radiation Monitoring Data

Tokyo, May 28 (Jiji Press)—Tokyo Electric Power Co. on Saturday disclosed detailed radiation monitoring data in its Fukushima No. 1 power plant that had been withheld from the public for two months.

The newly disclosed data included the results of monitoring conducted every two minutes between 3 p.m. March 12 (6 a.m. GMT) and the noon of March 14 at a monitoring post on the margin of the plant's premises to the west of the No. 5 and No. 6 reactors.

Tokyo Electric has eight monitoring posts at the edge of the plant's premises for regular monitoring activities. But following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, all power to the monitoring posts were lost.

The firm deployed special vehicles to continue its monitoring activities. One of the vehicles checked radiation levels every two minutes near the post in the west of the No. 5 and No. 6 reactors.

The newly disclosed results near the post showed higher radiation levels than at two other locations, including the front gate of the power plant, on which Tokyo Electric's monitoring result disclosure focused on until 9 a.m. March 12.

Jiji Press, May 28, 2011

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