

Are Most Nuclear Power Plants Vulnerable?

By [Washington's Blog](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

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Whenever there is a disaster, those responsible claim it was “unforeseeable” so as to escape blame.

For example:

- It happened with [9/11](#)
- It happened with [the financial crisis](#)
- It happened with the BP oil spill (see [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#))
- It happened with the [Japanese nuclear accident](#)

The big boys [gamble with our lives and our livelihoods](#), because they make a killing by taking huge risks and cutting costs. And when things inevitably go South, they aren't held responsible (other than a slap on the wrist), and may even be bailed out by the government.

Are All Nuclear Power Plants Vulnerable?

Much of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power complex has experienced difficulties because the earthquake knocked out the main power, and then the tsunami destroyed the backup diesel generators.

Of course, many other reactors are built in seismically active areas. But that's not my point.

Nasa scientists are predicting that a solar storm will knock out most of the electrical power grid in many countries worldwide, perhaps for months. See [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#).

Indeed, the Earth's magnetic field protects us from the sun's most violent radiation, and yet the magnetic field [fluctuates over time](#). As the Telegraph [reported](#) in 2008:

Large hole in magnetic field that protects Earth from sun's rays ... Recent satellite observations have revealed the largest breach yet seen in the magnetic field that protects Earth from most of the sun's violent blasts.

I'm not predicting some 2012 Mayan catastrophe. I am simply warning that a large solar storm – as Nasa is predicting – could knock out power throughout much of the world,

especially if the earth's magnetic field happens to be weak at the time.

What would happen to nuclear power plants world wide if their power – and most of the surrounding modern infrastructure – is knocked out?

Nuclear power companies are notoriously cheap in trying to cut costs. If they are failing to [harden their electrical components](#) to protect against the predicted solar storm, they are [asking for trouble](#) ... perhaps on a scale that dwarfs Fukushima. Because while Fukushima is the first nuclear accident to involve multiple reactors within the same complex, a large solar storm could cause accidents at multiple complexes in numerous countries.

If the nuclear power companies and governments continue to cut costs and take large gambles, the next nuclear accident could make Fukushima look tame.

I'm not saying this will happen in 2012, or 2013 (although Nasa appears to be hinting at this). But a large solar storm which knocks out electrical grids over wide portions of the planet will happen at some point in the future.

Don't pretend it is unforeseeable. The nuclear power industry is on notice that it must spend the relatively [small amounts of money](#) necessary to prevent a widespread meltdown from the loss of power due to a solar storm.

Note: Future generations of nuclear reactors will presumably run at lower temperatures and will store spent rods in a safer manner.

But most current reactors are of a similarly outdated design as the Fukushima reactors, where the cooling systems require electricity to operate, and [huge amounts of spent radioactive fuel are housed on-site, requiring continuous cooling to prevent radioactive release](#).

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