

Fukushima Nuclear Crisis Far From Over: Continuous Leaking of Radioactive Water, Dangers of Spent Fuel Pools

Plant Operator Has No Incentive to Spend Money to Fix It

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

Mainstream Media Awakens to the fact that Fukushima Is Still a Total Mess

After visiting Fukushima a year ago, Senator Ron Wyden warned that the situation was worse than reported ... and [urged](#) Japan to accept international help to stabilize dangerous spent fuel pools.

A year ago, an [international coalition](#) of nuclear scientists and non-profit groups called on the U.N. to coordinate a multi-national effort to stabilize the fuel pools. And see [this](#).

A year ago, former U.N. adviser Akio Matsumura – whose [praises have been sung by](#) Mikhail Gorbachev, U.S. Ambassadors Stephen Bosworth and Glenn Olds, and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State and Goldman Sachs co-chair John C. Whitehead – [noted](#):

The current Japanese government has not yet mentioned the looming disaster, ostensibly to not incite panic in the public. Nevertheless, action must be taken quickly. *** We believe an independent, international team of structural engineers and other advisers must be assembled and deployed immediately.

Yesterday – after Fukushima reactor operator Tepco's [recklessness and nickel-and-diming cheapness in dealing with the post-accident response](#) caused new releases of radioactivity – the New York Times [reported](#):

Increasingly, experts are arguing that the plant's operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company, or Tepco, cannot be trusted to lead what is expected to be decades of cleanup and the decommissioning of the plant's reactors without putting the public, and the environment, at risk.

"The Fukushima Daiichi plant remains in an unstable condition, and there is concern that we cannot prevent another accident," Shunichi Tanaka, chairman of the Nuclear Regulation Authority, said at a news conference.

"No wonder the water is leaking," said Hideo Komine, a professor in civil engineering at Ibaraki University, just south of Fukushima. He said that the

outer protective lining should have been hundreds of times thicker.

Muneo Morokuzu, a nuclear safety expert at the Tokyo University Graduate School of Public Policy, said that the plant required a more permanent solution that would reduce the flood of contaminated water into the plant in the first place, and that Tepco was simply unable to manage the situation. "It's become obvious that Tepco is not at all capable of leading the cleanup," he said. "It just doesn't have the expertise, and because Fukushima Daiichi is never going to generate electricity again, every yen it spends on the decommissioning is thrown away."

"That creates an incentive to cut corners, which is very dangerous," he said. "The government needs to step in, take charge and assemble experts and technology from around the world to handle the decommissioning instead."

This is just like BP's [massive efforts to hide](#) the [extent](#) and [damage](#) from the oil spill – even though their approach led to greater oil pollution – in order to avoid costs. (And the big banks' cover up of the [extent and damage from criminal fraud](#) on the U.S. economy.)

AP provides additional [details](#):

A makeshift system of pipes, tanks and power cables meant to carry cooling water into the melted reactors and spent fuel pools inside shattered buildings remains highly vulnerable, Nuclear Regulation Authority chairman Shunichi Tanaka acknowledged Wednesday.

The problems have raised doubts about whether the plant can stay intact through a decommissioning process that could take 40 years, prompting officials to compile risk-reduction measures and revise decommissioning plans.

Just over the past three weeks, there have been at least eight accidents or problems at the plant, the nuclear watchdog said.

Experts suspect the radioactive water has been leaking since early in the crisis, citing high contamination in fish caught in waters just off the plant.

"The nuclear crisis is far from over," the nationwide Mainichi newspaper said in a recent editorial. "There is a limit to what the patchwork operation can do on a jury-rigged system."

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