

# Fukushima 2.0: Japan Re-Starts Nuclear Plant Near Active Volcano

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#)

*We reported last October:*

Scientists [warned](#) that an earthquake could take out Fukushima. The Japanese [ignored the warning ... and even tore down the natural seawall which protected Fukushima from tidal waves](#).

Fukushima is [getting worse](#). And see [this](#) and [this](#).

Have the Japanese learned their lesson? Are they decommissioning nuclear plants which are built in dangerous environments?

Of course not!

Instead, they're re-starting a nuclear plant near a volcano which is about to blow ...

A month ago, there was an eruption at Mt. Ontake:



Screenshot from Youtube Video shot on September 29th of Mount erupting. 57 hikers were killed by the explosion



But – as Newsweek [reports](#) – a nuclear plant only 40 miles away will be re-started anyway:

Local officials have voted to reopen a nuclear plant in Japan, despite warnings of increased volcanic activity in the region from scientists.

The decision comes despite a warning on Friday that Japan's Seismological Agency had documented an increase of activity in the Iyama volcano, located 40 miles away from the power station.

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Sendai will become the first Japanese nuclear plant to reopen in since 2011.

However the decision comes as scientific authorities warned of increased seismic activity on the island. Volcanologists have warned that the 2011 earthquake, which measured 9.0 on the Richter scale, may have increased the likelihood of volcanic activity throughout the region. [[Background.](#)]

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The Sendai plant is also situated only 31 miles from Mount Sakurajima, an extremely active volcano which erupts on a regular basis.

The documentation of new activity comes barely a month after the eruption of Mount Ontake, when 57 hikers were killed on its slopes. There were no accompanying signs of seismic activity prior to the eruption which might have alerted Japanese authorities to the impending disaster.

The vote has been seen as an attempt to resurrect the country's nuclear industry, which the Japanese government hopes to restart despite public opposition to nuclear energy in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

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Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) approved Sendai's safety features in September, but the plant must still pass operational safety checks before it will be able to reopen.

What could possibly go wrong?

[Here's a hint:](#)

A cauldron eruption at one of several volcanoes surrounding the Sendai nuclear power plant could hit the reactors and cause a nationwide disaster, said Toshitsugu Fujii, head of a government-commissioned panel on volcanic eruption prediction.

Ene News [explains](#):

[Wall St Journal](#), Oct. 23, 2014 (emphasis added): One major volcanic eruption could make Japan "extinct," a study by experts at Kobe University warns... "We should be aware... It wouldn't be a surprise if such gigantic eruption were to take place at any moment."

[Japan Times](#), Oct. 24, 2014: Colossal volcanic eruption could destroy Japan at any time: study — Japan could be nearly destroyed by a volcanic eruption over the next century that would put nearly all of its population of 127 million people at risk... "It is not an overstatement to say that a colossal volcanic eruption would leave Japan extinct as a country," Kobe University earth sciences professor Yoshiyuki Tatsumi and associate professor Keiko Suzuki said... A disaster on Kyushu... would see an area with 7 million people buried by flows of lava and molten rock in just two hours [and] making nearly the entire country "unlivable"... It would be "hopeless" trying to save about 120

million...

[Japan Times](#), Oct. 24, 2014: Volcano near Sendai nuclear plant is shaking and may erupt... Authorities warned on Friday that a volcano a few dozen kilometers from the Sendai nuclear plant...may erupt. It warned people to stay away... Ioyama [shows] signs of rising volcanic activity recently, including a tremor lasting as long as seven minutes... the Meteorological Agency's volcano division said... [T]he area around the crater is dangerous, he added... On Friday, the warning level for the Sakurajima volcano was at 3, which means people should not approach the peak... Experts warn [the] earthquake in March 2011 may have increased the risk of volcanic activity throughout the nation...

[Japan Times](#), Oct 18, 2014: Sendai reactors vulnerable to eruptions[and] could cause a nationwide disaster, said Toshitsugu Fujii, University of Tokyo professor emeritus who heads a government-commissioned panel... [R]egulators ruled out a major eruption... [Fujii] said at best an eruption can be predicted only a matter of hours or days. Studies have shown that pyroclastic flow... at one of the volcanos near the Sendai plant... reached as far as 145 kilometers away, Fujii said. He said a pyroclastic flow from Mount Sakurajima... could easily hit the nuclear plant, which is only 40 kilometers away. Heavy ash falling from an eruption would make it impossible to reach the plant... he said. Many nuclear power plants could be affected...

[Asahi Shimbun](#), May 12, 2014: Now is the time to rethink the risk of operating nuclear power plants... it is the first time that Japan has seriously evaluated... the danger posed by volcanoes... Nuclear power plants...would suffer devastating damage from catastrophic eruptions...radioactive materials will continue to be scattered throughout the world...

[University of Tokyo professor Toshitsugu Fujii](#), head of government panel on eruption prediction: "Scientifically, they're not safe... If [reactors] still need to be restarted... it's for political reasons, not because they're safe, and you should be honest about that."

Surely, though, we're overreacting, and things aren't that dangerous, right?

After all, Japan Times [noted](#) last week:

The utility and the [Japanese] Nuclear Regulation Authority have also decided there is little chance of a major volcanic eruption in the next several decades.

And Reuters [notes](#) today:

Japanese utility Kyushu Electric Power said on Monday that it was monitoring activity at a volcano near its Sendai nuclear plant, but did not need to take any special precautions after authorities warned of the risk of a larger-than-usual eruption.

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"We are not currently taking any particular response," Kyushu Electric spokesman Tomomitsu Sakata said by phone.

"There is no impact in particular to the operations" of the Sendai plant, Sakata said.

See ... no problem!

Meanwhile, back in reality, EneNews [rounds up](#) reports of the risk:

[The Independent](#), Aug 16, 2015 (emphasis added): Japan's weather agency issued a warning... that the likelihood of the eruption of [Sakurajima] was extremely high... after it detected a spike in seismic activity... They have warned an evacuation of the city of just over 600,000 people may be necessary. [JMA] said: "The possibility for a large-scale eruption has become extremely high for Sakurajima."... It comes as a nuclear reactor 50 kilometres (31 miles) away was switched back on.

[Mainichi](#), Aug 17, 2015: On Aug. 15 alone, there were 1,023 volcanic earthquakes... the JMA has pointed out that crustal changes that indicate mountain swell as a result of a magma rise are still continuing... Kazuya Kokubo [with JMA said] "underground pressure hasn't been relieved. An eruption could occur at any time."

[Asahi Shimbun](#), Aug 16, 2015: ... the mountain [is] expanding... [officials] estimate that a large volume of magma continues to accumulate.

[Reuters/Kyodo](#), Aug 15, 2015: The agency also said it had raised the warning level ... to an unprecedented 4.

[Jiji Press](#), Aug 17, 2015: [Japan] remained alert for signs of a major eruption... [An official] called on the public to act calmly... a major eruption could be imminent. Level 4 is the highest ever for Sakurajima... "I have lived in Sakurajima for more than 50 years but have not imagined we would have to evacuate," said Emiko Miyashita, 80... crustal movement was also observed [and there's] signs indicating magma has risen to near the volcanic vent... "It would be no surprise if it were to erupt at any moment," an agency official said.

[Wall St Journal](#), Aug 17, 2015: [Japan] remained on high alert for a major eruption at Mount Sakurajima... Seismic activity began increasing dramatically Saturday morning and data showed swelling of the mountain, the agency said.

[Asahi Shimbun](#), Aug 15, 2015: [JMA] said a major eruption of volcanic Mount Sakurajima could be imminent... signs of sudden crustal movement were also observed... Agency officials said there were indications a much larger eruption was in the offing.

[Yomiuri Shimbun](#), Aug 15, 2015: A major eruption is highly likely to occur, the agency said... There is a possibility that magma has risen to the shallow part of the volcano...

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[Bloomberg](#), Aug 15, 2015: Volcanic rock and ash could cut off transport routes and prompt workers at Sendai to flee the nuclear site in the event of an eruption... engineering consultant John Large wrote.

[The Times](#), Aug 11, 2015: Environmentalists complain that the company has paid insufficient attention to the effect of heavy ash fall on the plant's machinery.

[Jiji Press](#), Aug 12, 2015: Sendai nuclear power plant... has not designated a site for relocating nuclear fuel in the event of a massive volcanic eruption, claiming that warning signs would give Kepco enough time to prepare and transfer the fuel... In the event of a major eruption, however, pyroclastic flows could reach the plant and disable cooling functions... which could trigger massive radioactive emissions... The sheer volume [of spent fuel] makes it hard to find a relocation site big enough to take them... Toshitsugu Fujii, a member of the panel [advising the gov't] said that the panel's opinion is not necessarily consistent with that of the NRA.

Do they have a death wish?

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