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Researchers Determine 23 Plants and 74 Active Nuclear Reactors Vulnerable to Effects of Tsunami

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By Madison Ruppert

The dangerous reality of nuclear power is becoming increasingly apparent in the wake of the continuing (and "profoundly man-made") disaster at Fukushima as well as studies which project similarly devastating disasters in the future.

Yet nations including Japan continue to press forward with nuclear power in spite of the clear dangers and the widespread public opposition to the deadly technology. That being said, Japan recently announced that they will seek to phase out nuclear power generation by 2040, although how hard they will push toward this goal has yet to be seen.

The case against nuclear power just gets stronger with another study headed by Spanish researchers which identifies nuclear power plants which are especially vulnerable to suffering the devastation of a tsunami.

"In total, twenty-three plants, in which there are seventy-four active nuclear reactors, are located in dangerous areas in east and southeast of Asia, including Fukushima I," *Homeland Security News Wire* reports.

The researchers found the "potentially dangerous" sites which are either already constructed or currently under construction. While scientists still cannot perfectly predict tsunamis and obviously thus cannot predict nuclear disasters as a result of tsunamis, they can identify potentially problematic sites before any real danger is present.

The study entitled, "Civil nuclear power at risk of tsunamis," was conducted by Joaquin Rodríguez-Vidal Jose M. Rodriguez-Llanes and Debarati Guha-Sapir and was published in *Natural Hazards* 63, no. 2 (September 2012).

The researchers determined the world's geographic zones which are at greater risk of being hit by large tsunamis and based on their data they determined that there are a whopping 23 nuclear plants with a total of 74 reactors in these danger zones.

Unsurprisingly, the researchers determined that one of the nuclear power plants in these high risk areas is the nuclear facility at Fukushima which continues to be shrouded in mystery thanks to the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the Japanese government.

Thankfully not all of the plants and reactors in these high risk zones are currently online. Of the 23 plants identified by the researchers, 13 plants and 29 reactors are currently active.

Other plants are being expanded to include even more additional reactors and seven brand new plants are under construction which will bring 16 new reactors online when complete.

“We are dealing with the first vision of the global distribution of civil nuclear power plants situated on the coast and exposed to tsunamis,” said José Manuel Rodríguez-Llanes, one of the authors of the study and researcher with the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium.

The researchers based their determinations of tsunami risk on a combination of factors including archeological, geological, historical and instrumental records.

While it is not just the area in Asia which is threatened by tsunamis, the areas highlighted by the study are at greater risk due to the presence of nuclear power stations.

“The impact of natural disaster is getting worse due to the growing interaction with technological installations,” said Debarati Guha-Sapir.

China is on the forefront of the expansion of nuclear power with China making up 27 out of the 64 reactors currently under construction.

“The most important fact is that nineteen (two of which are in Taiwan) out of the twenty-seven reactors are being built in areas identified as dangerous,” the researchers stated.

Japan’s reactors are still far from safe with seven plants and 19 reactors at risk, one of which is still under construction. South Korea is currently expanding two plants with five reactors, all of which are at risk according to the study. India’s two reactors and Pakistan’s single reactor are also at risk.

“The location of nuclear installations does not only have implications for their host countries but also for the areas which could be affected by radioactive leaks,” said Joaquín Rodríguez-Vidal, lead author of the study and researcher at the Geodynamics and Paleontology Department of the University of Huelva in Spain.

The researchers emphasize the need for lessons to be learned from the Fukushima disaster in order to avoid and prevent similar disasters in the future.

The authors noted that we are somewhat lucky that the Fukushima disaster occurred in one of the nations with the world’s highest standards in technological infrastructure and scientific development.

“If it had occurred in a country less equipped for dealing with the consequences of catastrophe, the impact would have been a lot more serious for the world at large,” the researchers stated.

Therefore, one would expect if such a disaster was to hit China, India or Pakistan, the damage would be considerably worse.

If we do not learn from the horrific damage caused by Fukushima – much of which is still not seen and the ramifications of which likely will not be accurately determined for decades –

we are doomed to repeat it.

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