

IAEA worried about radiation in Japan village

March 30 2011



This handout picture released by Greenpeace and taken on March 27, shows a Greenpeace team member holding a Geiger counter displaying radiation levels in Iitate city, Fukushima. Radiation levels recorded at a village outside the evacuation zone around the quake-stricken Fukushima nuclear plant are above safe levels, the UN atomic watchdog said Wednesday.

Radiation levels recorded at a village outside the evacuation zone around the quake-stricken Fukushima nuclear plant are above safe levels, the UN atomic watchdog said Wednesday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said safe limits had been exceeded at Iitate village, 40 kilometres (25 miles) northwest of Fukushima, well outside the government-imposed 20 kilometre exclusion zone and the 30-kilometre "stay indoors" zone.

"The first assessment indicates that one of the IAEA operational criteria for evacuation is exceeded in Iitate village," the IAEA's head of nuclear safety and security, Denis Flory, told reporters here.

The [watchdog](#) had advised Japanese authorities to "carefully assess the situation and they have indicated that it is already under assessment," Flory said.

But he said the IAEA -- which does not have the mandate to order national authorities to act -- was not calling for a general widening of the exclusion zone.

Iitate lies 40 kilometres (25 miles) northwest of the Fukushima [nuclear power plant](#), which was crippled by a tsunami on March 11 and several explosions, leading to frantic efforts to prevent a catastrophic meltdown.

Advice had been given to "carefully assess the situation and they have indicated that it is already under assessment," he said.

The reading in Iitate was merely a spot reading, he said.

"Deposition of radioactivity is something which is not the same everywhere, it depends on wind, it depends on rain and also on profile of terrain," Flory said.

"Saying at one point that there is a need to assess further does not mean that all around that is a concern."

But he said that overall, the situation at Fukushima "remains very serious."

According to Elena Buglova, head of the IAEA's Incident and Emergency Centre, the reading in Iitate village was 2 megabecquerels

per square metre.

That was a "ratio about two times higher than levels" at which the agency recommends evacuations, she explained.

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