

Experts: Ocean life can handle radioactive leaks

April 4 2011, By MALCOLM RITTER , AP Science Writer



In this Thursday, March 24, 2011, photo available Friday, April 1, 2011, inside of the Unit 4 at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant is seen in Okumamachi, northeastern Japan. Steam comes out of debris by a crane device, in green, at the unit, Kyodo reports. The March 11 earthquake off Japan's northeast coast triggered a tsunami that barreled onshore and disabled the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant. (AP Photo/Tokyo Electric Co. via Kyodo News) JAPAN OUT, MANDATORY CREDIT, NO LICENSING IN CHINA, HONG KONG, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA AND FRANCE

(AP) -- Releases of radioactive water into the ocean near Japan's stricken nuclear complex shouldn't pose a widespread danger to sea animals or people who might eat them, experts say.

That's basically because of dilution.

"It's a very large ocean," noted William Burnett of Florida State University.

Very close to the nuclear plant - less than half a mile or so - [sea creatures](#) might be in danger of problems like [genetic mutations](#) if the dumping goes on a long time, he said. But there shouldn't be any serious hazard farther away "unless this escalates into something much, much larger than it has so far," he said.

Ken Buesseler of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole, Mass., said readings for radioactive iodine and [cesium](#) show a thousand-fold drop from the shore to monitors about 19 miles offshore.

He said radioactive doses in seafood may turn out to be detectable but probably won't be a significant health hazard. They'd probably be less of a concern than what people could get from land-based sources like drinking water or eating produce, he said.

No fishing is allowed in the vicinity of the complex.

[Radioactive water](#) has been seeping into the Pacific Ocean from the [nuclear plant](#), and on Monday plant operators began releasing more than 3 million gallons of tainted water to make room at a storage site for water that's even more radioactive.

Igor Linkov, an adjunct professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie Mellon University, also said he did not expect any major impact on [ocean](#) wildlife or people who eat seafood.

He agreed that animals near the plant may be affected. It's not clear in what way, because the level of radiation isn't well known, he said. In any case, fish would probably escape such an effect because unlike immobile species such as oysters, they move around and so would not get a continuous exposure, he said.

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