

Japan disaster not similar to Chernobyl: officials

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The potential health consequences of the nuclear crisis at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi plant are not equal to those caused by the disaster at Chernobyl, Japanese health officials said Tuesday

The levels of radioactive materials Cesium 134 and 137 are "much less than those of the accident at Chernobyl," said Makoto Akashi of Japan's National Institute of Radiological Sciences.

Akashi made the comparison to Chernobyl, a Soviet nuclear plant that partially exploded in Ukraine in 1986, on the sidelines of a special session devoted to the Fukushima crisis at the World Health Organisation's 64th General Assembly.

"We do not think the radiation in Japan will contribute to an increase risk of cancer and leukemia," he said, adding that there is need "to study the issue very closely."

The tsunami triggered by the massive magnitude-9.0 seabed quake on March 11 knocked out the Fukushima plant's water cooling systems, leading [fuel rods](#) inside several reactors to partially melt and sparking explosions.

At the session, Japan's vice-minister for health Kouhei Otsuka said "the number of deaths from radiation is zero for the moment," noting that his government evacuated some 85,000 people from the area affected by the disaster.

He said it was crucial for all people who worked at the plant "to be closely monitored."

Akashi said no one has needed medical treatment for [radiation poisoning](#) since the accident.

Japanese authorities estimate that the amount of radioactive material released into the atmosphere at [Fukushima](#), around 250 kilometres northeast of Tokyo, represents around one tenth of the emissions at Chernobyl.

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