

Honda plans nuclear mission for robot

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Japan's Honda is hoping to retool its humanoid robot ASIMO for a nuclear mission so it can join emergency work inside the crippled Fukushima Daiichi plant, a press report said Friday.

The company aims to upgrade the robot's upper body functions so that it can move its arms as smoothly as a human being, with motorised shoulders, elbows and wrists, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper reported.

The current ASIMO, introduced in 2000 and resembling a small astronaut, stands 130 centimetres (4 feet 3 inches) tall. The bipedal bot can walk or run, carry trays, push carts and shake hands with people.

But to work in the debris-strewn [nuclear plant](#), ASIMO would likely be modified and fitted with tyres or caterpillar tracks, the report said.

No official at Honda's head office was immediately available for comment.

The plant has been leaking radiation from its [reactors](#) since its [cooling systems](#) were knocked out by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. At some hotspots radiation is high enough to be lethal to humans.

Robots have already been used inside the plant to take video footage, including the US-made PackBot and Japanese-made Quince crawler robots.

More information: *Update: Corporate Affairs & Communications, American Honda Motor Co., Inc. commented:*

"Regarding your recent story about ASIMO, please note that this report is speculation. Although Honda hopes that ASIMO will someday be a helper to people, at this point the robot is solely a research and design project."

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