

25 Years After Chernobyl

Japan Nuclear Disaster Put on Par With Chernobyl

April 11, 2011 By HIROKO TABUCHI and KEITH BRADSHER

TOKYO — Japan has decided to raise its assessment of the accident at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant to the worst rating on an international scale, putting the disaster on par with the 1986 Chernobyl explosion, the Japanese nuclear regulatory agency said on Tuesday. The decision to raise the alert level to 7 from 5 on the scale amounts to an admission that the accident at the nuclear facility, brought on by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, is likely to have substantial and long-lasting consequences for health and for the environment. Some in the nuclear industry have been saying for weeks that the accident released large amounts of radiation, but Japanese officials had played down this possibility...

...an official from the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric and Power, said, "The radiation leak has not stopped completely and our concern is that it could eventually exceed Chernobyl."

On the International Nuclear Event Scale, a Level 7 nuclear accident involves "widespread health and environmental effects" and the "external release of a significant fraction of the reactor core inventory."

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/12/world/asia/12japan.html>)



Agence France-Presse Getty Images

Workers and patients at a hospital not far from the stricken nuclear plants.

(<http://www.nytimes.com/packages/flash/newsgraphics/2011/0311-japan-earthquake-map>)

25 years after Chernobyl, Japan faces the 'unthinkable'

By Karyn Poupee, Agence France-Presse First Posted 04/17/2011

The causes of the two disasters were also very different – Fukushima was knocked out by the worst earthquake ever recorded in Japan and the huge tsunami that followed in its wake, while Chernobyl was blamed on human error.

Nonetheless, for the Japanese public, the comparison with Chernobyl has raised the spectre of deserted landscapes, contaminated for decades, and thousands of people exposed to dangerous levels of radiation.

(<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/breakingnews/world/view/20110417-331654/25-years-after-Chernobyl-Japan-faces-the-unthinkable>)



(<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/asia/Japan-Video-Grid.html>)

Chernobyl -25 Years later...985,000 cancer deaths

New Book Concludes: Chernobyl death toll 985,000, mostly from cancer
by Karl Grossman September 15, 2010 (Excerpts follow)

Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment was published by the New York Academy of Sciences. It is authored by three noted scientists:

Russian biologist Dr. Alexey Yablokov, former environmental advisor to the Russian president; Dr. Alexey Nesterenko, a biologist and ecologist in Belarus; and Dr. Vassili Nesterenko, a physicist and at the time of the accident director of the Institute of Nuclear Energy of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Its editor is Dr. Janette Sherman, a physician and toxicologist long-involved in studying the health impacts of radioactivity.

The book is solidly based--on health data, radiological surveys and scientific reports--some 5,000 in all.

It concludes that based on records now available, some 985,000 people died, mainly of cancer, as a result of the Chernobyl accident. That is between when the accident occurred in 1986 and 2004. More deaths, it projects, will follow...

An important lesson from the Chernobyl experience is that experts and organizations tied to the nuclear industry have dismissed and ignored the consequences of the catastrophe," it states.

The book details the spread of radioactive poisons following the explosion of Unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear plant on April 26, 1986. These major releases only ended when the fire at the reactor was brought under control in mid-May. Emitted were "hundreds of millions of curies, a quantity hundreds of times larger than the fallout from the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki." The most extensive fall-out occurred in regions closest to the plant--in the Ukraine (the reactor was 60 miles from Kiev in Ukraine), Belarus and Russia.

However, there was fallout all over the world as the winds kept changing direction "so the radioactive emissions" covered an enormous territory."

The radioactive poisons sent billowing from the plant into the air included Cesium-137, Plutonium, Iodine-131 and Strontium-90...

The consequences on public health are extensively analyzed. Medical records involving children--the young, their cells more rapidly multiplying, are especially affected by radioactivity--are considered. Before the accident, more than 80% of the children in the territories of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia extensively contaminated by Chernobyl "were healthy," the book reports, based on health data. But "today fewer than 20% are well."

There is an examination of genetic impacts with records reflecting an increase in "chromosomal aberrations" wherever there was fallout. This will continue through the "children of irradiated parents for as many as seven generations." So "the genetic consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe will impact hundreds of millions of people."

(http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/db_article.php?print&article_id=141)



Photos of children – from Chernobyl Legacy by Paul Fusco

