

# PRESS RELEASE



米国大使館 報道室 PRESS OFFICE, U.S. EMBASSY, TOKYO TEL. 3224-5264 / 5265 / 5266 FAX. 3586-3282

<http://japan.usembassy.gov>

11-18R

March 20, 2011

## An Update for American Citizens in Japan

We all recognize the enormous impact that the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, as well as the resulting dangerous situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant, has had on Japan. The United States is continuing to do everything it can and should do to support our close friends, the people of Japan, as they respond to this disaster. This includes providing humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, technical expertise as well as equipment as requested. The American people have also opened up their hearts. Many have given generously to support the ongoing relief efforts. As President Obama said on March 17, we are confident that Japan will recover and rebuild because of the strength and spirit of the Japanese people.

At the same time, this disaster has had a significant impact on the lives of Americans residing in Japan. The Embassy is working to provide the best possible guidance to U.S. citizens in Japan.

**Guidance to U.S. Citizens in Japan:** With regard to the nuclear situation, which we know is of concern to U.S. citizens residing in Tokyo and other regions relatively close to the Fukushima power plant, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) recommends that U.S. citizens who reside within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant leave the area, or remain indoors as much as possible if departure is not practical. That recommendation is based on the steps that the NRC would recommend if a similar situation had occurred in the United States, in light of the scientific and technical data that the NRC, the Department of Energy, and other technical experts in the U.S. Government have obtained from the Japanese government and from U.S. collection assets in Japan. Outside of that 50-mile area, we are urging American citizens to carefully monitor both our guidelines and the guidelines of the Japanese government.

**Departure of Embassy Family Members:** Given the extraordinary circumstances, the State Department and Department of Defense (DOD) on March 16 authorized the voluntary departure of eligible family members and non-emergency DOD civilians from Tokyo, Nagoya, Yokohama and the prefectures of Aichi, Chiba, Fukushima, Gunma, Ibaraki, Iwate, Kanagawa, Miyagi, Nagano, Niigata, Saitama, Shizouka, Tochigi, Yamagata, and Yamanashi. Separately, voluntary departure was authorized for eligible family members at Misawa AB (Aomori Prefecture). We took this step out of an abundance of caution, and in order to enable U.S. government officials and the uniformed military to concentrate on the tasks at hand. Our employees remain in country, and we are absolutely open for business – in fact, the number of people working at the Embassy now is much larger than before the earthquake due to the number of experts who have arrived from the United States to augment our operations in these difficult times. We look forward to our dependents returning to Japan once the situation has eased.

**Concerns about Radiation:** The situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Site has naturally raised concerns about how far radioactive contamination might spread, and to what degree. As stated above, the NRC recommends that U.S. citizens who reside within 50 miles (80 kilometers) of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant leave the area, or remain indoors as much as possible if

departure is not practical. Available data indicates that levels of radioactivity at the reactor site itself are variable, but remain very dangerous. Aerial measurement data shows the degree of radioactive contamination at ground level varying considerably by location, with the most affected areas thus far stretching to the northwest of the reactor site, well within the 50-mile recommended perimeter.

Farther from the reactor site, radiation monitoring by the Japanese government, U.S. government assets, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) all indicate that levels of radiation measured in Tokyo as well as Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures remain at background levels, well below levels which are dangerous to human health. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is providing regular updated radioactivity measurements by prefecture, available at [www.mext.go.jp/english/radioactivity\\_level/index.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/english/radioactivity_level/index.htm). This data appears consistent with measurements generated by WHO, the IAEA and the U.S. government. WHO information is available at [www.wpro.who.int](http://www.wpro.who.int) and IAEA data at [www.iaea.org](http://www.iaea.org). U.S. government experts have also continuously monitored radiation levels on Embassy grounds since March 14, using sophisticated radiation detection meters including high-volume pump samplers that collect information on a 24-hour basis. We have consistently observed normal background levels of radiation.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Travel Health Precaution as of March 19 states that “At this time, the risk of exposure to radiation and the risk of contamination from radioactive materials are believed to be low, especially for anyone outside a 50-mile radius of the nuclear power plant.” See [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for details. The United States government will continue to monitor the situation closely and will advise its citizens of any significant developments.

**Radiation and Food Safety:** Japanese government entities have reported elevated levels of radioactivity found in certain foodstuffs, including milk and certain vegetables, produced in areas relatively close to the Fukushima reactor site. Specifically, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has announced that radiation levels that exceeded legal limits were detected in milk produced in the Fukushima area and in certain vegetables in Ibaraki. The ministry has requested the Bureau of Sanitation at the Fukushima Prefectural Office, after conducting an investigation of the relevant information, to take necessary measures, such as identifying the provider of these samples and places where the same lots were distributed and banning sales based on the Food Hygiene Law. We expect Japanese authorities will continue to monitor the situation closely and continue to share information publicly, while taking any necessary remedial action. Some useful information on food safety aspects as well as other related topics is available from the WHO at [www.who.int/hac/crises/jpn/faqs/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/hac/crises/jpn/faqs/en/index.html).

**The Situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Site:** As has been widely reported in the Japanese and international media, the Japanese government is dealing with a significant crisis at the Fukushima reactor site and is putting utmost efforts into taking immediate steps to avoid further deterioration of the site, while preparing for a longer-term process of more permanent remediation. The United States government will continue to monitor the situation closely and will advise its citizens residing in Japan of any significant developments that could impact health or safety.

Leading U.S. experts from the NRC, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. military are in place in Japan, cooperating directly with Japanese authorities to help contain the damage at the Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors. They are monitoring technical aspects and engaging with Japanese officials on efforts to cool the reactors at Fukushima, as well as regarding the health impacts of radiation. We are sharing critical expertise, equipment, and technology so that the courageous responders on the scene have the benefit of American teamwork and support. Data

and ideas are being shared, and we look forward to continuing to work side-by-side with our Japanese partners in helping them deal with this problem. The situation at the site continues to be fluid; one source of information is press releases from Japan's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency available at [www.nisa.meti.go.jp/english/](http://www.nisa.meti.go.jp/english/).

**Travel within Japan and to Overseas Destinations:** Commercial flights have resumed at all major airports in Japan, except Sendai Airport, and commercial seats continue to be available. In Tokyo, most public transportation including trains and subways are operating. Many roads have been damaged in northern Japan, particularly in Miyagi Prefecture where government checkpoints have been established on damaged roadways. In Iwate Prefecture, toll road highways are restricted to emergency vehicles only. Some information on major highways and other infrastructure is available at [www.mlit.go.jp](http://www.mlit.go.jp).

**Electricity Supply:** Rolling power outages continue in the Tokyo Metropolitan area and areas in northeast Japan affected by the earthquake and tsunami. Please monitor the Tokyo Electric Power Company website ([www.tepco.co.jp/en/index-e.html](http://www.tepco.co.jp/en/index-e.html)) and local news media for specific information and schedules for the planned outages. Radio stations in the Tokyo area that have emergency information in English include the U.S. Armed Forces station at 810AM and InterFM (76.1FM).

**Assistance to U.S. Citizens in the Affected Areas:** The U.S. Embassy deployed consular assistance teams around the Tohoku region, where they worked with local authorities to locate U.S. citizens, visit shelters and assistance centers, and help U.S. citizens identify public and commercial transportation options away from affected areas. U.S. citizens requiring emergency consular assistance can continue to contact the Department of State via e-mail to [JapanEmergencyUSC@state.gov](mailto:JapanEmergencyUSC@state.gov) or through the emergency contact numbers below. At times like these, U.S. citizens in Japan should be certain to contact family and friends in the United States to confirm their well-being at the earliest opportunity. Where internet and telephone services are not available, it may be possible to contact people using SMS (cell text message) or other forms of social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

Updated information on travel and security in Japan may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

# # #