



Japan Advisory – Radiation Levels in Japan

The radiation levels in most parts of Japan, including Tokyo, are within the normal range of background radiation. Some areas remain restricted due to higher levels of radioactive contamination.

How did parts of Japan become contaminated?

As a result of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant accident, radioactive material was released into the atmosphere and the marine environment.

Radioactive material released into the atmosphere resulted in immediate fallout, contaminating surfaces in local areas. Once surfaces are contaminated with radioactive material, goods and foods produced in these areas then have the potential to become contaminated. Large amounts of contaminated water have also been released to the ocean near the power plant.

Are any areas still restricted?

Initial concerns about radiation levels due to the deposited radioactive material led to evacuation of the public out to a 20 to 30 km radius in the weeks following the accident. This was followed by planned evacuations for residents in areas north-west of the Fukushima Dai-ichi site where ground contamination was high.

While some residents have been allowed to return home because radiation levels have fallen, other areas are expected to remain restricted for many years. The Japanese Government is continuing with decontamination efforts to enable most residents to permanently return to their homes.

Are food and water in Japan safe to eat?

Contamination of the food chain occurred in localised areas from radioactive material deposited on the ground and released to the ocean with levels varying geographically and with time.

Measurements taken by the Japanese Government following the accident showed radioactive iodine and caesium levels in water and soil to be in excess of the regulatory guidance levels in certain areas of Fukushima Prefecture and in some other areas within Japan. This led to the government restricting the distribution and consumption of food grown in these areas.



Monitoring Station in Fukushima

Photo: Tepco (<http://www.tepco.co.jp/en/index-e.html>)

Since the accident in 2011 the Japanese Government have reviewed their food safety regulations to control the amount of radioactive material in foods. In April 2012 new limits were established and additional testing procedures were introduced to ensure that the food produced in Japan continues to be safe to consume.

What about rivers and oceans?

The Japanese Government operate and maintain a seawater monitoring program offshore in the affected Prefectures. Past and current results of the monitoring programs can be found on the website of Nuclear Regulation Authority (<http://radioactivity.nsr.go.jp/en/>).

Water contaminated with radioactive material continues to leak into the Pacific Ocean from the site. However there is a minimal impact on public health due to these releases. Fishing is not allowed in the area close to the nuclear plant.

Is it safe to travel to Japan?

Radiation levels in most parts of Japan, including Tokyo, are normal. Entry to some areas close to the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant is restricted due to elevated radiation levels. More detailed travel advice and a map showing the restricted areas is available at www.smartraveller.gov.au. This site is regularly updated to reflect the current situation.