

Japan Nuclear Safety Agency: Radioactive Water Leaks to the Ocean 'Zero' 保安院 海への汚染水、ゼロ扱い 「緊急」で法適用外

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 12 Number 30 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Translated by Satoko Norimatsu

Introduction by Satoko Norimatsu and Matthew Penney

Tokyo Shimbun, which many regard as one of the few Japanese newspapers that honestly report what is going on at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, ran an important article yesterday, drawing on their own investigative interview with NISA, Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, a division of METI, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry. Here is a translation of the report. This is a critical article that calls for further investigation, particularly in the wake of PM Noda's "Cold Shutdown" declaration concerning which questions have been raised by experts and international media (See [New York Times](#), [Bloomberg](#), [CNN](#), [Xinhua](#)). According to Geoff Brumfiel at *Nature*: "the reactors are

leaking, and TEPCO must continue to inject water at the rate of around half-a-million litres a day, according to its latest [press release](#). Moreover, the plant continues to pose an environmental risk, as evidenced by a [recent leak](#) from a system designed to decontaminate water flowing out from the core." [Bloomberg](#) quotes reactor safety expert Narabayashi Tadashi: "Achieving cold shutdown does not change the condition of the reactors. It does mean the government will start reviewing evacuation zones and perhaps lifting restrictions depending on extent of contamination." He also emphasises that "Work on decommissioning is a long way off. For now, they have to focus on making robots to remove melted fuel and developing new technologies to demolish facilities." With work on bringing Fukushima Daiichi under control far from over, despite the Japanese government's self-congratulatory tone in the "Cold Shutdown" announcement, *Tokyo Shimbun's* exposé on the lack of official concern for radioactive water leaks seems particularly important. Even if the situation at the plant itself is improving, honest reporting is absolutely necessary as Japan moves from control to clean-up. Here again, Japanese regulators and politicians seem to be falling short.

Japan's Nuclear Safety Agency Regards Radioactive Water Leaks to the Ocean as "Zero."

Original article in Japanese at: <http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/national/news/CK2011121602000186.html>

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According to Tokyo Shimbun's interview with NISA (Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency), the agency has regarded the radioactive water leaks from the Fukushima Daiichi reactors as "zero" in their legal term, for the reason that it is a "state of emergency." They plan to continue to regard any future leak or intentional release as "zero." The Japanese government plans to announce "cold shutdown" on December 16, but it is a questionable attitude for the government to neglect one of their criteria of "cold shutdown," which is "radioactive release being under control."

According to law, electric companies are required to set the maximum amount of total radioactive release into the ocean per year for each nuclear power plant. That amount for Fukushima Daiichi is 220 billion becquerels (Cesium, etc), and when the year changes, they reset to "zero."

On April 2, highly radioactive water was found leaking from Reactor No.2, and on April 4, TEPCO intentionally released radioactive water with lower contamination into the ocean, in order to make room to store more contaminated water.

With these two incidents alone, the amount of radioactive release outside of the nuclear plant is 4,700 tera-becquerels (according to TEPCO estimate), 20,000 times the allowable limit.

This TEPCO estimate has been criticized by experts in and outside of Japan as "underestimation."

On December 4, water contaminated with 26 billion becquerels of radioactive Strontium leaked into the ocean from the equipment that

vaporizes and condenses processed contaminated water.

It is estimated that the tanks to store processed contaminated water within the plant will be full by early next year. Water stored in those tanks contains radioactive Strontium too. TEPCO has been considering further cleansing the water and releasing into the ocean. With opposition by fishery organizations, they have decided to postpone it.

NISA, in the interview with Tokyo Shimbun, emphasized the fact that their priority has been dealing with the accident, and the damage at the Fukushima Daiichi plant was a "state of emergency," one in which radioactive leaks could not be prevented. That was their reason for not applying the maximum allowable total amount of radioactive release and regarding the leak of 4,7000 tera-becquerels of radioactive material as "zero."

NISA has stated this special treatment due to the "state of emergency" may continue until "the accident is brought under control," but they are ambiguous on when that exactly will be, saying it is a "matter to be discussed."

NISA has said that even when (TEPCO) releases radioactive water into the water, they will continue to regard the release as "zero."

Tokyo Shimbun

Asia-Pacific Journal articles on related subjects include:

Satoko Norimatsu and SAY-Peace Project, [Protecting Children Against Radiation: Japanese Citizens Take Radiatoin Protection into Their Own Hands](#)

Fujioka Atsushi, [Understanding the Ongoing Nuclear Crisis in Japan: A "Two-Headed Dragon" Descends into the Earth's Biosphere](#)

Philip Brator, ["Public Anger", Power, and the Rule of Japanese Elites](#)