

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONROE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Nuclear Event in Japan Poses No Health Risk in Monroe County

(Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Monroe County, MI---Highly sensitive radiation monitors operated by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others have detected very low levels of radioactive material in the air in the United States. These levels are consistent with estimated releases from the damaged nuclear reactors. These findings were expected, given the sensitivity of our monitors and the fact that radioactive material is known to travel in the atmosphere. Federal, state, and local authorities will continue to monitor levels.

Are there any groups of people that should be especially sensitive to radiation?

Infants, pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding are particularly sensitive to radiation. However, levels being measured now are still many times below the risk for even these groups. At this time, there is no need to take extra precautions with regard to drinking water.

Is it safe to drink rain water?

If someone uses rainwater as a drinking water source, they could be exposed to radiation at higher levels than someone who drinks water from a public system. However, the levels being seen now are 25 times below the level that would be of concern for use as a sole source of water over a short period of time.

Will contaminated rainwater hurt me? Is it okay for my kids to play in the rain?

The very low levels of radioactive material currently being measured in surface water and rain water are far below those of public health concern.

Is it okay for my pet to drink the rainwater?

Drinking rainwater contaminated with radioactive material at the levels currently being detected is unlikely to harm your pet.

Since contaminated rain may have fallen in my area, is it okay to eat food from my garden or use rain water to irrigate it?

Yes. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to wash food from your garden before you eat it.

Is it okay to take a shower or bath? Swim in a pool? In a river or lake?

Showering, bathing, or swimming in water with the currently measured amount of radioactive material will not harm your health.

Should I drink bottled water instead of tap water?

At this time, there is no reason to switch to bottled water. State and local authorities will provide information for your community if this situation changes.

Should I be testing my water?

At this time, there is no need to take extra precautions with regard to drinking water. States and the federal government routinely conduct water monitoring for safety and are working to ensure that drinking water does not pose a health risk to people in the US.

Is this likely to be a long-term problem?

Given the uncertainty related to the nuclear reactors in Japan, we don't know how levels of radiation currently seen in surface water and rain water will change in the immediate time period. However, we do know that Iodine-131 disappears relatively quickly in the environment.

Phone Hotline: The American Association of Poison Control Centers has volunteered to take calls from the public regarding potential exposures related to the events in Japan. If you have questions about radiation, you can call their toll free number: 1-800-222-1222.

For more information:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation>
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at <http://www.epa.gov/japan2011>
- USA.gov at <http://www.usa.gov/Japan2011.shtml>
- Monroe County Health Department website at <http://www.co.monroe.mi.us/publichealthEP>
- Contact Dr. Tatyana Ivanova, Public Health Preparedness Director, Monroe County Health Department at tatyana_ivanova@monroemi.org

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