



City and County of San Francisco

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San Francisco FAQ-Japan Nuclear Emergency

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What are the health risks to the Bay Area from the Japanese nuclear emergency?

Currently, there are no health risks to San Francisco residents from Japan's nuclear emergency. Over 5,000 miles of air and water separate the Bay Area from Japan. Rain and distance help dilute any radiation in the air. There have been no dangerous levels of radiation in San Francisco from the nuclear power plants in Japan and we do not anticipate any impacts.

What is potassium iodide and should I buy it to protect myself and my family?

Because there are no dangerous levels of radiation in San Francisco, potassium iodide is not recommended for San Francisco residents and should never be taken without consulting your healthcare provider. Potassium iodide is a chemical compound that has been known to protect the thyroid from certain types of radiation, but does not offer full body immunity from harmful radiation.

Should I give potassium iodide (KI) to my children?

Potassium iodide can be especially harmful to children and should not be administered to them.

The Center for Disease Control, the California Department of Public Health, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and San Francisco Department of Public Health are among the many agencies that do not recommend taking potassium iodide because of the nuclear emergency in Japan. Potassium iodide is only recommended to be taken within a few hours while in an area of a known dangerous radiation.

Are food and products from Japan safe?

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has imposed strict controls on all foods and consumer products imported from Japan. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration said it has placed an import alert on all milk, milk products, fresh vegetables and fruits from certain regions. This means that no products of these types from the prefectures of Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi and Gunma can enter the United States without first being shown to be safe. The radiation monitors being used by the FDA are extremely sensitive and can help to identify shipments of potential concern to target for laboratory analysis. Any food you find in San Francisco from Japan is safe to consume.

The mission of the San Francisco Department of Public Health is to protect and promote the health of all San Franciscans.

We shall ~ Assess and research the health of the community ~ Develop and enforce health policy ~ Prevent disease and injury ~
~ Educate the public and train health care providers ~ Provide quality, comprehensive, culturally-proficient health services ~ Ensure equal access to all ~

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Is radiation still being monitored in San Francisco?

Yes. Radiation monitoring for San Francisco is being done by the US Environmental Protection Agency. At present, no significant levels of radiation have been detected and no radiation is expected in the Bay Area or the West Coast. City officials remain in close contact with State and Federal agencies such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and California Emergency Management Agency (CA EMA) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

Is there a plan to monitor individual buildings for radioactive contamination?

Federal, state, and local health authorities are not recommending environmental monitoring of local buildings for radioactive contamination. Federal and state agencies are conducting air monitoring throughout the west coast and there are no radiological threats to human health from the nuclear reactor threats in Japan. Air monitoring requires collecting large volumes of air over several hours on filters to collect sufficient particulates for testing. These methods are very sensitive. Given the safe levels reported from air monitoring, testing buildings is unnecessary at this time.

What is the Airport doing to ensure travel in and out of San Francisco Airport (SFO) is safe?

U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials are routinely checking all arriving aircraft at San Francisco International Airport for signs of radiation contamination. To date, no significant levels have been observed and no unsafe levels of radiation have been detected at any US airport. If you have made travel plans to fly in or out of San Francisco International Airport, (SFO), you should continue with your plans. Flying in and out of San Francisco International Airport (SFO) continues to be safe.

Are ships from Japan coming to San Francisco?

No Japanese cargo or passenger cruise ships dock at the Port of San Francisco.

Where should I go when I want more information?

The Department of Public Health will provide updates if more information becomes available. As a final word of reassurance, there is currently no radiation threat to the Bay Area from Japan. The very best course of action right now is to make sure you are prepared for an emergency of any type. Visit <http://72hours.org> for more information.

For more information:

For more information, please call the California Department of Public Health nuclear emergency hotline at **916-341-3947**. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Pacific Daylight time.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), Seven days a week, 24 hours a day. www.cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Information on Radiation:

CDPH Website:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/RadiationFAQS2011.aspx>

Spanish link:

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/Informacionsobrelaradiacion.aspx>

CDC Health Effects and Treatment for Radiation Emergencies:

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/radiation/healtheffects.asp>

Preparing for emergencies:

San Francisco Emergency Preparedness: <http://72hours.org>

California Be Prepared: <http://bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/epo>