

ESF 8 Health & Medical Area Command Bulletin

PREPARING FOR RADIATION EMERGENCIES

April 2011

Bulletin #12

The Situation

Residents of Japan have suffered devastating consequences since the magnitude 9.0 earthquake which occurred in northeast Japan on 11 March. Impacts to Washington state have included the concern and bereavement of families with close connections to Japan; public concern about radioactivity in the environment and food supply; and implementation of new screening procedures at U.S. borders for travelers from Japan.

The Washington state Department of Health's Office of Radiation Protection and federal partners do not expect radioactive materials from Japan to pose a health threat in the United States.

What Health & Medical Area Command is doing currently:

Locally, Health & Medical Area Command took the following actions following the March 11 earthquake in Japan:

- Initiated conference calls on March 12 with the Department of Health and local emergency managers to discuss potential risks and coordinate messaging to partners and the public
- Continuing to monitor the situation and coordinate with the Washington state Department of Health regarding radiation monitoring levels
- Sending health advisories and information materials regarding radiation to local health care providers
- Circulating a short script to assist call takers in partner facilities with responding to inquiries about radiation



Treating individuals who have been in the affected area:

- Individuals who have been in the affected area of Japan and travelers from Japan testing positive for radioactive material at U.S. borders are being advised by Washington state Department of Health and federal agencies to see a health care provider for advice on whether further evaluation or testing is needed. Washington state Department of Health is responding to requests from residents or healthcare facilities to screen the clothing and travel items of travelers from Japan for external radiological contamination. To request this service, call the Washington state Department of Health, Office of Radiation Protection's 24/7 hotline: 206-NUCLEAR.



John Erickson, head of emergency preparedness for the WA State Dept. of Health, demonstrates radiation monitoring equipment in Tumwater, WA.

Drugs and medical devices produced in Japan:

- With production and exports from Japan disrupted, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is working with companies who receive product from Japan to resolve their supply issues. [Rx Response](#) – a coalition assembled to help ensure the steady supply of medicines during disasters – expects few impacts to the U.S. supply of drugs and medical devices from events in Japan.

about this bulletin:

Health & Medical Area Command at Public Health – Seattle & King County would like to share the following information to educate our health care and community partners about preparation for radiological incidents, given the increased attention to these issues generated by events in Japan. We have issued similar bulletins on topics such as flood risks in the Green River Valley, influenza, and winter weather preparedness to outline situational updates, planning activities and other information specific to health, medical and mortuary response.

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[questions]

please direct to healthcoc@kingcounty.gov

[save the date: august 17th healthcare coalition summer forum]

Topic: **Radiation Preparedness**... Stay tuned for further event

Potential Impacts to Health Care *continued:*

- **Radiation Injury Treatment Network:**
Seattle Cancer Care Alliance is a member of the [RITN](#), a national network of centers that provides evaluation and treatment for victims of radiation exposure or other marrow toxic injuries. During radiological emergencies, the region could receive an influx of patients with marrow toxic injuries. So far, RITN centers have not been asked to consider taking patients impacted by events in Japan.
- **Long term health monitoring:**
It is uncertain whether individuals residing in Japan at the time of the incident or assisting with the response will need long term health monitoring to assess radiation impacts, which is a state and local public health responsibility.
- **Behavioral health:**
Many King County residents have close connections to Japan, and it can be difficult coming to terms with this tragedy.
- **Food safety:**
Federal agencies with responsibility for overseeing the safety of the U.S. food supply have increased nationwide monitoring of milk, drinking water, seafood, and other potential exposure routes. Low levels of iodine -131 have been detected in milk samples from Spokane, WA, and San Luis Obispo County, CA, as well as trace amounts in drinking water samples from Boise, ID, and Richland, WA. The amounts are so low that they pose no health risk, reports the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. This presence of radioactive materials well below levels of public health concern was expected. Similar findings are to be expected in the coming weeks. For more information on food safety, see the [U.S. EPA's](#) and [U.S. FDA's](#) pages on the events in Japan.

What Your Organization Can Do To Prepare:

- ✓ Seek training on medical response to radiation incidents through organizations such as the Department of Energy's Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site ([REAC/TS](#)), the [Emergency Response Training Institute](#), or the [CBRNE Academy at Bellevue Hospital Center](#)
- ✓ Update facility evacuation and shelter in place plans
- ✓ Review patient and facility decontamination procedures and incorporate current best practices http://www.remm.nlm.gov/ext_contamination.htm
- ✓ Encourage personal preparedness planning among your staff <http://www.govlink.org/3days3ways/>
- ✓ Purchase and store personal protective equipment appropriate for a radiological emergency http://www.remm.nlm.gov/radiation_ppe.htm



The Food Safety Modernization Act, signed into law in January 2011, gives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration wider latitude in protecting our food supply.

critical resources

- Poison Control Center information about radiation 1-800-222-1222
- [American Red Cross tips](#) to help people cope with this disaster
- "Just in Time" Training from Columbia University School of Public Health: [Radiation 101](#)
- [Radiation emergency medical management](#)
- U.S. State Department [Japan travel information and advisories](#)
- CDC [Fact Sheet on Potassium Iodide](#)
- CDC [Radiation emergencies – information for clinicians](#)
- CDC [FAQ on Iodine-131 Found in Surface Water](#)

VOLUNTEER TODAY!

King County Public Health Reserve Corps needs medical and non-medical volunteers during public health emergencies and major disasters!

Visit:

www.kingcounty.gov/health/phrc

or email:

phrc@kingcounty.gov

[for more information]

Washington State Department of Health
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/japan2011.htm>

Public Health – Seattle & King County
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/radiation.aspx>

World Health Organization
http://www.wpro.who.int/sites/eha/disasters/2011/jpn_earthquake/list.htm