

Fukushima Update, Summer 2013

2 1/4 years after the triple meltdown at Fukushima, things are sliding ever faster downhill over there.

One of their problems is the 400 tons a day of groundwater that leak into the plant. They can't block it off completely or the lethal water already in the plant's basements would leak out. So they have to maintain positive pressure, or let the water run in. So they built tanks to hold the deadly water that they pump out of the reactor basements, tanks which are now holding 390,000 tons of water. Till now, they've stored this in steel tanks, built from segments. (Whose gaskets will need replacing in 2 years; another problem. One started leaking today.) Building new tanks was getting difficult, so they dug 7 big swimming-pool sized, underground tanks. Which they lined with two sheets of plastic, each 1.5 millimetres thick. And a 1/4" (6mm) layer of clay-bearing cloth. When the standard thickness for an ornamental pond is 20mm of plastic, and for an urban dry rubbish dump is 40mm, by their own laws. So why are they allowed to get away with 1.5mm? Turns out the agency which should tap them on the shoulder over this cost-cutting 'has no experts in waste deposits of this type' so just OK'd whatever Tepco proposed. And Tepco will never get Fuku open again, so any money spent on cleanup is lost money, so they cut what corners they can. Later they'll say sorry. And resign to a well-paid retirement, leaving it to other generations to deal with..

And it now turns out all 7 of the swimming-pool sized tanks are leaking. So Tepco have to build more above-ground tanks to transfer the 58,000 tons of water from the 7. Which will take a few months to complete. As they continue leaking. Never mind, they said, it will take ten years for water leaked from there to reach the sea. Because there's lots of sand in the way. This from the industry whose basic premise was always that they would keep radioactivity out of the environment for ever, as radioactivity is bad for life. And even if the ten years were true, which it isn't, a ten year delay on lethality with a half life of dozens of centuries is little comfort.

However, if they stop ground water flowing in from outside, they have to add more 'groundwater' to stop the water in the basements flowing out. Since they cant fix the holes/cracks in the basement walls. Too radioactive to work anywhere near the basements. And water poured in the top of the reactors is leaking straight out. And they have to do this for 40 years. Now they talk of maybe freezing the ground to make a wall. In a few years..

Why the drama? Isn't Japan capable of building one 400 ton water-tank a day? This the land that built the Yamato, the heaviest, best armed battleship ever. 72,000 tons, 18.1 inch guns..Or is Tepco trying to do all this on the cheap; more money for them and more pollution and cancer for the rest of the human race?

And they found fish in the ex-power plants harbour with contamination of 740,000bqs/kilo. A new record. Bear in mind the governments own (very high) safety limit is 100 bqs/kilo for foodstuffs. So 740,000 is not a good number.. The net across the harbour to stop such fish 'escaping' got ripped off in a storm. They said sorry. They found the plume of caesium from Fukushima to be east of Hawaii. And the Japan Agency for Marine Earth Science and Technology Research researchers found caesium in 12 out of 12 samples of plankton that they took from around the Pacific. Which will be eaten by something which will be eaten by something eaten by us humans. Oh dear.. And they found caesium in samples taken from 7300 metres deep in the Pacific only 4 months after the meltdowns. And what goes around comes around..

So, last update we were waiting for the response of the fisherfolk of Fukushima to Tepco's plans to dump the 'filtered, treated' water into the Pacific. Only contains tritium, said Tepco, which they claim is harmless. (We don't agree..) And they would dilute it with more seawater first, they said. Results are now in; the fisherfolk said 'No'. Also to Tepco's plan to pump up groundwater before it enters the plant and dump that into the sea. Despite Tepco's assurances last month that it was clean. Which they today (early June) revised to admit that the groundwater contains caesium and the rest.. Turns out its getting hard to accurately test samples at Fukushima Daiichi plant because the background radiation is high, and difficult to 'allow' for.

And they've had rats short out the electricity supply, knocking out the spent fuel pool cooling for 29 hours. The switching gear was sitting on the back of a truck, with some plastic sheeting and gaffa tape protecting it from the elements. Had been like that for 2 years. Cutting edge technology. And they are close to running out of workers there. Why work there for only \$100 a day when you can get \$150 doing decontamination work elsewhere. And many workers are over their 'radiation allowance' for the year so have to leave. An internal nuke industry letter admitted Japan could do without nuclear power's 30% contribution to Japan's electricity and that claims of impending blackouts was a ploy.

All in all, more messy by the day. An object lesson in why these nuclear power stations shouldn't be built. Yesterday MidAmerican Energy in Ohio decided to scrap a planned 1 GW nuke and build 656 windmills instead. Cheaper and safer, they and we reckon. And Japan has actually installed 1.5 GW of solar panels in the last three months; at that rate they could replace their 54 nukes in 9 years. A windmill or solar panel won't destroy a third of your country if it has a bad day. Germany produced 22 GW from solar panels during the midday hours last Friday and Sat, 31/5 and 1/6/13. Shows what can be done.

For more info; KickNuclear.org or Japanese Against Nuclear Januk.org; for daily updates FukushimaDiary.org or Enenews.com or Simplyinfo.org. Or No2nuclearpower.org.uk.