

Fukushima nuclear plant starts 2nd release of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea

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This aerial view shows the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima, northern Japan, on Aug. 24, 2023, shortly after its operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings TEPCO began releasing its first batch of treated radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean. Japan's wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant said it began releasing a second batch of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea on Thursday, Oct 5, 2023, after the first round of discharges ended smoothly. Credit: Kyodo News via AP, File

Japan's wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant said it began releasing a second batch of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea on Thursday after the first round of discharges ended smoothly.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings said workers activated pumps to dilute the treated water with large amounts of seawater, slowly sending the mixture into the ocean through an undersea tunnel for an offshore release.

The wastewater discharges, which are expected to continue for decades, have been [strongly opposed by fishing groups](#) and neighboring countries including South Korea, where hundreds of people staged protest rallies. China banned all imports of Japanese seafood, badly hurting Japanese seafood producers and exporters.

The plant's first wastewater release began Aug. 24 and ended Sept. 11. During that release, TEPCO said it discharged 7,800 tons of treated water from 10 tanks. In the second discharge, TEPCO plans to release another 7,800 tons of treated water into the Pacific Ocean over 17 days.

"So far, we are strictly following the procedures and everything is moving smoothly as planned," said TEPCO spokesperson Keisuke Matsuo. He pledged to safely carry out the second round of release while closely monitoring data from seawater samples taken from multiple locations off the plant.



Japanese Agriculture Minister Ichiro Miyashita, right, and Malaysian celebrity Amber Chia attend an event at Japanese store, Don Don Donki in Kuala Lumpur Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023 to promote the safety and deliciousness of Japanese scallops to shoppers. Japan hopes to resolve the issue of China's ban on its seafood within the scope of the World Trade Organization ambit and will hold food fairs overseas to bolster seafood exports amid safety concerns over the release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, Miyashita said Wednesday. Credit: AP Photo/Eileen Ng

About 1.34 million tons of radioactive wastewater is stored in about 1,000 tanks at the plant. It has accumulated since the plant was crippled by a massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

TEPCO and the government say discharging the water into the sea is unavoidable because the tanks will reach capacity early next year and space at the plant will be needed for its decommissioning, which is expected to take decades.

They say the water is treated to reduce radioactive materials to safe levels, and then is diluted with seawater by hundreds of times to make it much safer than international standards.

Some scientists say, however, that the continuing release of low-level radioactive materials is unprecedented and needs to be monitored closely.

Japan's government has set up a relief fund to help find new markets and reduce the impact of China's seafood ban. Measures also include the temporary purchase, freezing and storage of seafood and promotion of seafood sales at home.



Members of civic groups stage a rally to demand the stop of the Japan's release of treated radioactive water from the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant into ocean, in front of a building which houses Japanese Embassy, in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, Oct. 5, 2023. The signs read "Oppose to release the second radioactive water into ocean." Credit: AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon



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Cabinet ministers have traveled to Fukushima to sample local seafood and promote its safety.

TEPCO is tasked with providing compensation for reputational damage to the region's seafood caused by the wastewater release. It started accepting applications this week and immediately received hundreds of inquiries. Most of the damage claims are linked to China's seafood ban and excess supply at home causing price declines, TEPCO said.

Agriculture Minister Ichiro Miyashita promoted Japanese scallops at a food fair in Malaysia on Wednesday on the sidelines of a regional farm ministers' meeting.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has reviewed the safety of the wastewater release and concluded that if carried out as planned, it would have a negligible impact on the environment, marine life and human health.

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