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# Don't Drink the Rainwater

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By [Tim Persinko](#)

The [Virginia Department of Health](#) has issued a warning to state residents: do not drink rainwater.

The warning comes after radioactive particles released in [Japan](#) have been documented around the [United States](#) and now in places on the East Coast.

From a [release issued Sunday](#):

VDH is advising residents that the state's drinking water supplies remain safe, but reminds Virginians out of an abundance of caution they should avoid using rainwater collected in cisterns as drinking water.

[Virginia](#) officials say that trace amounts of radioactive material have been detected across the country. "As a result of the incident with the nuclear power plant in Japan, several EPA air monitors have detected very low levels of radioactive material in the U.S.," state health commissioner Karen Remley said. "To date, none of Virginia's multiple monitoring systems has detected a level of radioactive material that would pose a public-health concern."

Although radiation readings have yet to raise real alarm, Virginian health officials have stepped up testing as a precaution. Scheduled monitoring of air, drinking water, vegetation, and milk will be moved up by a week to begin this Monday. Officials are also coordinating with federal and state partners to keep tabs on the concern.

In [Maryland](#), no rainwater warnings have been issued.

[State health officials there say](#) testing of rain water samples has not revealed any greater radiation readings. Maryland officials are telling residents that there is no need right now for residents to take potassium iodide tablets, the drug that protects the thyroid gland from radiation exposure.

Concerns about radioactivity on the East Coast come after trace amounts of the radioactive isotope iodine-131 were found in rainwater samples in Boston. Public health officials there said the material matched particles released by the reactor in Sendai, Japan. Subsequent tests of drinking water in Massachusetts did not find any radioactivity, because rain water falling into drinking water becomes so diluted. The radioactivity in iodine-131 decays very quickly - it has a half-life of 8 days.

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