

Special Report: Disaster in Japan

[CBC News](#)

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The latest: Japanese nuclear regulators had been relying on an outdated, [one-page memo](#) that claimed the Fukushima Daiichi plant was safe from any of the waves caused by an underwater earthquake, according to a May 27 report from The Associated Press. The document, created by the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co., nearly 10 years ago, was based on a maximum 8.6-magnitude temblor off the coast of Japan, one-quarter as powerful as the 9.0-magnitude earthquake that struck on March 11.

On May 26, people from the region around Japan's radiation-leaking nuclear plant who have been kept from their homes since March 11 were [given two hours to return](#) to their dwellings and collect some of their belongings.

On May 17, workers [entered one of the damaged reactor buildings](#) at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant for the first time since it was rocked by an explosion in the days after the March 11 earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

VIDEO SERIES: Japan's recovery

Paul Hunter and his CBC News team [travel Japan and document how the country is coping and recovering](#) from the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

A senior nuclear adviser to Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan [resigned April 30](#), criticizing the government for ignoring his advice on radiation limits and not doing enough to deal with the crisis at the plant. Toshiso Kosako, who is also a professor at the University of Tokyo, said the government's 20-millisievert limit for radiation exposure is too high, especially for children. In a statement, Kan's administration called the resignation "unfortunate" and said the government has always followed the advice of the country's nuclear safety commission.

More than 15,000 people have been confirmed dead while another 8,500 are missing, according to the country's [National Police Agency](#).

Japan relief

[How to contribute](#)

A [strong aftershock ripped](#) through northeastern Japan on April 7, killing three people. The 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast about 65 kilometres from Sendai, and a tsunami warning was issued but later lifted.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company, the utility that runs the nuclear plant, has [offered](#) 20 million yen (about \$228 million) in "apology money" to every town and city in the 20 kilometre mandatory evacuation zone around the plant. Japan's nuclear safety agency has said it [could take months](#) to bring the situation at Fukushima under control.

Since the earthquake, the country's central bank has pumped more than 80 trillion yen (\$937 billion US) into the financial system to stabilize markets.

The event: The biggest earthquake to hit Japan since officials began keeping records in the late 1800s [struck off the country's northeast coast March 11](#) at 2:46 p.m. local time. It was at first designated a magnitude 8.9 and later raised to 9.0.

The initial quake was followed by hundreds of aftershocks — including a 7.1-magnitude one on April 7 — and triggered a tsunami that swallowed homes, swept away cars and boats and forced people to scramble to higher ground.

- For a more detailed look at the damage caused by the earthquake and its aftermath, view [an interactive map](#) of Japan.
- For a comparison of damaged areas before and after the earthquake, see a [gallery of satellite images](#).

Where: The original quake [struck at a depth of 24 kilometres](#) about 125 kilometres off the northeastern coast of Japan. The massive wave it triggered swamped dikes in Japan's northeast, leaving a massive trail of debris. Cities and villages along the 2,100-kilometre stretch of coastline were shaken by violent tremors that reached as far away as Tokyo, hundreds of kilometres from the quake's epicentre.

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Nuclear risk: The earthquake and subsequent tsunami [damaged the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant](#), knocking out power to its cooling systems. That affected the fuel rods in some of the plant's six reactors and in the pools where spent but still radioactive fuel rods are stored, setting off a series of hydrogen explosions, which caused further damage.

On April 12, the government [boosted the severity level](#) of the crisis to seven, the highest rating on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale and on par with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

CITIZEN BYTES: [Street-level stories from Japan](#)

Local reaction: Japan's government initially sent 100,000 troops and other personnel to the affected areas, including 9,500 firefighters and 920 police officers. The Japanese Red Cross has deployed 95 medical teams, with a total of 735 people, including doctors and nurses. Unlike in the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, the government was also [quick to accept foreign help](#), and several countries have sent aid teams. It is expected to cost upwards of \$300 billion US to repair the damage.

Global impact: [Three major Japanese manufacturers](#), Sony, Toyota and Honda, announced they would need to halt production or extend shutdowns on their production lines because of a shortage of parts. A leading research firm, IHS, has predicted that it may result in a shortfall of five million cars worldwide.

Social media

- A [Google Maps mashup](#) shows a random, real-time selection of tweets originating in different areas in Japan. It was developed by [Virender Ajmani](#), a software developer based in Detroit.

Earthquake Map

The epicentre of the Japan earthquake and areas affected by the tremors and tsunami.

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Connect Newsroom Blog



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