

Communications: Being Upfront: The Nuclear Industry Speaks

“Psychosocial effects would be anticipated for all scenarios and could include fear of radiation exposure, anxiety, and stress. *Clear, credible and regular communication from responsible parties before, during and after the emergency* would help to minimize these effects. In addition, these effects would be expected to decline rapidly once the affected population returns to their normal life patterns. For non-human biota, like birds and mammals, no acute effects would be expected.” [iii of “Extended executive summary” in “Study of Consequences of a Hypothetical Severe Nuclear Accident and Effectiveness of Mitigation Measures” *Italics mine.*]

“The CNSC Integrated Action Plan applies to all operating nuclear facilities and the CNSC. The areas for continuous improvement that emerged from the Plan are:
strengthening defence in depth
enhancing emergency response
improving regulatory framework and processes
enhancing international collaboration
enhancing communications and public education” [Pg.9; *emphasis mine*]

“Dissemination of information and raising awareness regarding emergency planning through various means by those organizations with emergency planning responsibilities is done on an ongoing basis. In the event of an actual incident, effective, coordinated communication amongst responsible organizations is essential before, during and after the actual incident.” [pg. 32, *emphasis mine*]

“Ineffective communication and/or coordination of measures to protect the populations at risk will have a similar consequence. These effects are likely to extend to residents in the Secondary Zone who are likely to be less familiar with the plant and associated emergency plans, if they feel they are not receiving the information or assistance they need in a timely way.” [pg. 67, in section 6.4 on **Psychosocial effects**; *emphasis mine*]

“Clear, credible and regular communication from responsible parties before, during and after the emergency would help to minimize these effects as would transparent decisions (e.g., based on health-based limits and other factors) for the return of residents to their homes and daily lives.” [pg. 67]

The IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) has stated in their Publication “Lessons Learned from the Response to Radiation Emergencies (1945 – 2010),” (IAEA, August 2012) a comment in the chapter “providing information and issuing instructions and warnings to the public,” about the importance of providing information to the public on protective actions to be taken in event of an emergency in advance of any emergency for

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threats such as Nuclear Power Plants. They state “This will engender confidence – the knowledge that the officials have their interest at heart – and, by doing so, improve compliance with protective action recommendations in the event of a real emergency. In addition, there will be a better understanding of the systems used to warn them of an emergency.” (*emphasis mine*)

The ICRP (International Commission on Radiological Protection) backs up this IAEA advice; note their comment in ICRP Publication 109, which recommends engagement with stakeholders and discussions of the plans, including with members of the public. The rationale is that “Otherwise, it will be difficult to implement the plan effectively during the response. The overall protection strategy and its constituent individual protective measures should have been worked through with all those potentially exposed or affected, so that time and resources do not need to be expended during the emergency exposure situation itself in persuading people that this is the optimum response.” (at 42; *emphasis mine*)

++ ON CAUSES OF FUKUSHIMA ACCIDENT

“A major factor that contributed to the accident was the widespread assumption in Japan that its nuclear power plants were so safe that an accident of this magnitude was simply unthinkable. This assumption was accepted by nuclear power plant operators and was not challenged by regulators or by the Government. As a result, Japan was not sufficiently prepared for a severe nuclear accident in March 2011.” [*August 2015 Report of the IAEA, Foreword by the Director General*]

Toshimitsu Homma of the Japan Atomic Energy Agency stated in April 2013 at an international conference on Emergency Management (held in Ottawa) that the most important lesson of Fukushima was that before the accident, **“There was an implicit assumption that such a severe accident could not happen and thus insufficient attention was paid to such an accident by authorities.”**

The Fukushima nuclear accident was the result of “human error in which people failed to make the proper preparations.” – *Former Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan*

“The government, the regulators, TEPCO management, and the Kantei lacked the preparation and the mindset to efficiently operate an emergency response to an accident of this scope. None, therefore, were effective in preventing or limiting the consequential damage.” — from [The official report of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission](#) (pg. 18)

“The Commission has verified that there was a lag in upgrading nuclear emergency preparedness and complex disaster countermeasures, and attributes this to regulators’ negative attitudes toward revising and improving existing emergency plans.” – from [The official report of The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission](#) (pg. 19)