

JAPAN: NUCLEAR ACCIDENT

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The Disaster

A serious nuclear accident occurred at a uranium-processing plant in Ibaraki Prefecture, 125 kilometres north east of Tokyo at 10:35 local time on 30 September. The accident seems to have been caused by human error at the plant, when workers poured too much uranium solution into a tank, hitting critical mass and pushing radiation levels up 20,000 times higher than normal.

The government lifted its order cordoning off the area within a 350 meter radius of the accident site on 2 October. The order was lifted following deliberations by the government's Nuclear Safety Commission and experts on nuclear safety, conducted at the Science and Technology Agency. The Chief Cabinet Secretary of the government announced that it was safe for the approximately 120 residents evacuated to a community centre to return to their homes.

Red Cross/Red Crescent Action

At a first aid post set up in the auditorium of Mito Red Cross Hospital in cooperation with Ibaraki Prefectural Central Hospital, 3,181 residents were screened for radiation exposure and all turned out to be negative. The Mito and Sashima Red Cross Hospitals in Ibaraki Prefecture, Hiroshima Red Cross Atomic Bomb Hospital, and Nagasaki Red Cross Atomic Bomb Hospital sent medical teams to establish first aid posts in the community centres, and evaluated 13,577 residents by 3 October. The medical teams from Nagasaki and Hiroshima will leave the area on 4 and 7 October, respectively.

The American Red Cross swiftly sent the ARC guidelines and manuals to relevant organisations regarding preparedness and response to nuclear incidents. These materials have been immediately forwarded to the Internal Relief Division and the Ibaraki Red Cross Chapter.

Needs

No international assistance is required at this time.

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