

TEPCO mulling over dumping radioactive water into Pacific Ocean due to leaks

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Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) cannot seem to catch a break as recently, incident after incident of leaks in its water storage tanks have been discovered. This has prompted notions that the embattled electric utility might be forced to dump radioactive water into the Pacific Ocean as it continues decommissioning work at the Fukushima nuclear power plant.



TEPCO is using water to cool down its reactors at the Fukushima station, whose cores suffered multiple meltdowns due to the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, but is running out of secure storage locations in which to dump the highly radioactive water after it has been used to cool the nuclear cores. Leaks have discovered in [three out of seven underwater storage tanks](#) in the past week, drastically limiting options for contaminated water storage. The company has tried to assuage the issue by making a makeshift cooling system that was sealed, but even the water there is breaching the walls at an alarming rate of 400 tons of contaminated water a day. The company is faced with two options at this point in time, said Kazuhiko Kudo, a professor of nuclear engineering at Kyushu University. Kudo says that TEPCO can continue to [build aboveground storage tanks](#), a huge race against a process that may put out more radioactive water faster than the company can build tanks. The second option is to try to reduce the used water's radioactive levels and dump them into the Pacific Ocean.

A lot of variables will then come into play if TEPCO then decides to run with the latter option. Released radioactivity into the open environment is not something that neighboring nations will take lightly. There is also the issue of how much radioactivity will be released and at what levels should there be danger warnings. Even at the other side of the Pacific, effects are already allegedly felt – [researchers have tested Pacific bluefin tuna](#) caught in San Diego, California in August 2011 and found cesium levels 10 times higher than normal. Fishermen in the Fukushima area fear for their livelihood, as people will surely back of their product once TEPCO [starts dumping into the ocean](#). But TEPCO is not ruling out the option, for very obvious storage reasons. TEPCO officials, including President Naomi Hirose, have encouragingly said that it will not “easily” release radiated water into the ocean. But the statement indicates more the possibility of it happening than not. “It’s obvious TEPCO cannot keep storing water forever as it increases by 400 tons a day,” said Hideyuki Ban, co-director of the anti-nuclear group Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center.

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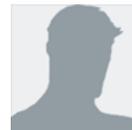
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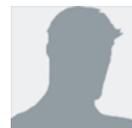
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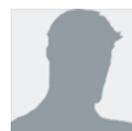
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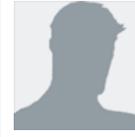


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