

GA Green Topic B Update Paper



Since the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, Japan has continued to clean up the facility and made strides to decontaminate the surrounding areas. Despite these efforts, a town just south of the plant has only seen 3% of its residents return since the nuclear disaster.¹ Notwithstanding guarantees from government officials and scientists that returning to the area is safe, it remains difficult to assure

residents that they will remain safe in the future. The nuclear disaster has seriously damaged local confidence in government and the operators of the nuclear plant.

While the immediate need to clean-up after a nuclear disaster is an important aspect of this topic, cleaning up a nuclear disaster is intrinsically linked to the second part of the topic, the storage of nuclear wastes. In order to cool the nuclear material at the Fukushima plant, water must be poured over it. When water is poured over nuclear material it becomes contaminated and must be stored. Currently, Tepco, the operators of the power plant, store this nuclear contaminated water in 850 storage tanks on the nuclear station's property.² While this might prove to be an adequate solution in the short-term, questions remain regarding how long this solution will work and the potential risks of storing nuclear wastewater in tanks in an area that was hit by a tsunami just 8 years ago.

A proposed solution to this wastewater issue is to dump it into the nearby ocean where it will become diluted in the vastness of the ocean and, according to proponents of this method, will not prove environmentally harmful. But local residents and, in particular, fishermen remain vehemently opposed to such an action, fearing that the nuclear wastewater will damage the environment and harm the natural ecology.

While working to prevent nuclear disasters is important, the storage of nuclear waste remains a contentious issue in many countries. In the United States, efforts to store nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain has continually been derailed, causing a back-up of un-stored and, sometimes, unsecured nuclear wastes throughout the country. Despite this opposition, the United States Congress in 2018 reopened plans to store nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain.³

¹ <https://asia.nikkei.com/NAR/Articles/Fukushima-population-falls-as-post-disaster-scars-linger>.

² <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/09/national/fukushima-no-1-cleanup-continues-radioactive-water-rumors-also-prove-toxic/#.XI6IeLh7k2w>.

³ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/03/yucca-mountain-congress-works-revive-dormant-nuclear-waste-dump/664153002/>.