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March 28, 2011

## Criticism of Nuclear Power Increases Following Disaster in Japan

by Robert Kropp

As high levels of radiation continue to escape Japanese nuclear reactors, RepRisk issues a special report on risks associated with nuclear power.

SocialFunds.com -- Weeks after an earthquake and tsunami devastated northern Japan, [news reports](#) today indicate that high levels of radiation continue to escape from the nuclear reactors damaged in the disaster.

According to the article in today's New York Times, "Highly contaminated water is escaping a damaged reactor at a crippled nuclear power plant in Japan and could soon leak into the ocean." Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), the operator of the damaged facility, announced that the radiation levels—1,000 millisieverts per hour—are "at least four times the permissible exposure levels for workers at the plant and 100,000 times greater than water ordinarily found at a nuclear facility," the article continued.

As the unfolding disaster in Japan has led to renewed concerns about reliance on nuclear power, [RepRisk](#), a data provider that compiles negative news on companies' environmental and social performance, has issued a [Special Report on Nuclear Power](#).

In its report, RepRisk analyzes criticism aimed at five nuclear power plants, including the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan, one of those crippled by the disaster there. According to the report, "Two failures can be linked to the current crisis at Fukushima Daiichi NPP: failure to adequately judge the facility's vulnerability to seismic activity and failure to maintain proper safety standards." RepRisk found that TEPCO ignored recommendations that the Mark 1 design of the plant be discontinued because of safety risks, as well as findings "that Mark 1 reactors had a 90 percent probability of bursting should the fuel rods overheat and melt in an accident."

Furthermore, the report continued, the plant "has received extensive news coverage revealing that TEPCO engaged in numerous cover-ups and falsified safety records to keep the plant open."

The other nuclear power plants addressed in the report are located in India, Bulgaria, Romania, and Brazil. However, "The push to approve more controversial nuclear power projects does not only come from emerging markets," the report stated. "Of the 100 most controversial nuclear power projects, 48 percent are located in North America or Western Europe."

In the US, the "government is considering re-approving the operating license for the Diablo Canyon NPP, in spite of its being located close to a major fault line that runs along the California coast," the report continued.

Investment decision-making on nuclear power by sustainable investors varies, although even those that may invest in companies involved in nuclear power generation tend to proceed cautiously. [Calvert](#), for instance, "will...consider investment in companies that are leaders in developing renewable energy and/or mitigating climate change, even though they may also be involved in nuclear power. However, Calvert will seek to avoid investing in companies that own or operate new nuclear power plants."

[Domini Social Investments](#) "does not invest in companies that are significant owners or operators of nuclear power plants," citing concerns over safety and transparency, waste, and nuclear weapons.

A 2007 [report](#) by a coalition including members of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility \(ICCR\)](#) concluded, "Building expensive new nuclear plants will divert private and public investment from the cheaper and readily available renewable and energy efficiency options needed to protect our climate."

"In competitive markets, new nuclear power plants will be bad investments," the report continued.

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