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Fukushima. The Risk for Workers: “Levels of Radiation Could Increase Exponentially”

TEPCO Fights Humidity in No 2 Reactor - Workers Hospitalized

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TEPCO has now released to the media that more than 9 workers have suffered from

heatstroke, and at least two workers were hospitalized for dehydration. The weather onsite is beginning to heat up for summer, and this will make it much more difficult to accomplish tasks on-site.

The situation inside of Reactor 2 is much like that on the roof of Chernobyl. The heat, humidity, and radiation make a workers stay time a matter of minutes once inside of the reactor, even with full protective gear on. There is much work that needs to be accomplished inside of the reactor, but radiation levels extending outside of the building are rising.

The risk for workers increases in areas littered with debris, because the levels of radiation can increase exponentially in proximity to radioactive debris. After a few days, ambient radiation will have begun to effect the machines onsite, and without debris removal, lowering the radiation levels and making a safe work environment for workers is impossible. The protection equipment that workers wear onsite can weigh in excess of 20 pounds, and with high levels of humidity, in can become difficult to breathe through the filtration masks.

At Chernobyl, the worst of of the radioactive debris accumulated inside what was left of the reactor. On the roof of the destroyed reactor high levels of radiation rendered the robotic equipment useless within a few days, forcing men on to the roof to remove the debris. The workers would work shifts between 40 seconds and 7 minutes, scrambling across the littered roof to remove the debris and lower the radiation levels.

At Fukushima Daiichi, the grounds surrounding the reactor buildings is littered with radioactive debris. Inside of the buildings, many areas were destroyed by the earthquake, and 3 months later many areas of high radiation are still being discovered.

There is also an increased risk of Corium escaping the housing units and reaching an underwater source, or an alternate route to the ocean. Corium is a mixture of melted fuel rods and other materials that is a semi-liquid material comparable to lava. If the mixture comes into contact with water, a steam explosion will occur, ejecting high radioactive material high into the atmosphere and surrounding areas.

At Chernobyl, the flooded pools and basement had been accumulating water, and were a serious steam explosion risk. 2 workers perished in the efforts to open the sluice gates and drain the bubbler pool and prevent the steam explosion. At Fukushima Daiichi, the situation is much more complicated. The water is accumulating outside of the reactor buildings, the grounds around the reactor have been subjected to massive amounts of water being injected into the reactors, and there are many leaks that have been found that lead directly into the ocean.

Related articles

Workers at Fukushima plant treated for dehydrationTwo workers at the troubled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant have been treated for dehydration at a hospital. TEPCO said the 2 workers were installing cables near a nuclear waste disposal facility. Both are contract workers in their 40s. They were sent to a clinic inside the plant on Sunday morning after they said they felt unwell. TEPCO said they were later sent to a hospital in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture, where they were treated for dehydration. TEPCO said no radioactivity was detected, but one worker was advised to stay in hospital for about a week, and the

other to stay home for 3 days.
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TEPCO mulls ways to cut humidity in No.2 reactor

The operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant says it will try to reduce humidity inside the Number 2 reactor building. Tokyo Electric Power Company says humidity and high radiation levels mean workers can work only for short periods of time even if they wear protective gear.

TEPCO says it plans to reduce the amount of radioactive materials inside the reactor building and then open the doors to lower humidity, now at 99.9 percent.
It is possible that radioactive substances will leak out of the Number 2 reactor building once the doors are open. TEPCO says it will make a final decision after carefully assessing the levels of radioactivity. Work to fix a water level gauge was supposed to begin as early as mid-June, to help ensure stable cooling. But there may be a delay if the company cannot reduce the humidity.

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