

# LATEST FROM JAPAN: Unfolding Nuclear Catastrophe?

Two Japanese Nuclear Reactors Have Melted Down ... Problems at Four Others

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [Asia](#)

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Early this morning, the Fukushima I nuclear power plant melted down:

And see [this](#).

Now, MSNBC [reports](#):

A partial meltdown is likely under way at second quake-stricken nuclear reactor [the Fukushima III reactor], Japan's top government spokesman said Sunday.

Fuel rods were briefly exposed and radiation levels briefly rose above the legal limit at the nuclear plant where both reactors are located, said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano.

His statement came after Japan's largest electric utility started releasing steam Sunday at the second nuclear reactor while trying to stop a meltdown that began a day earlier in another.

MSNBC also [notes](#) that "the government [is] warning there could be an explosion at a second reactor [i.e. plant number 3] crippled by Friday's devastating earthquake."

BBC [points out](#) that a meltdown at number 3 could be more serious than number 1, because it uses plutonium as well as uranium:

The plant's operator says pressure is rising inside reactor No. 3 after it lost its emergency cooling system.

A similar problem led to a blast at the plant's No. 1 reactor on Saturday. ...

But the BBC's Chris Hogg in Tokyo says the second reactor is a different type

which uses [MOX](#) (plutonium plus uranium) fuel and the consequences of a problem there are potentially more severe.

Hopefully, the problems at the [4 other troubled Japanese nuclear reactors](#) will be contained.

Many experts have said the disaster is not as bad as Chernobyl. But Forbes' William Pentland [notes](#), nuclear expert Kevin Kamp says:

"Given the large quantity of irradiated nuclear fuel in the pool, the radioactivity release could be worse than the Chernobyl nuclear reactor catastrophe of 25 years ago."

And the Telegraph [writes](#):

Tokyo, at least, appeared to have got away without the scale of casualties seen in other parts of Japan. That was before news of an explosion, and warnings of a possible "meltdown", at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. As the evening turned to night, the world's second-largest metropolis was still waiting to know whether it had been exposed to what would be perhaps the world's worst nuclear disaster.

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