

Aerospace Medical Association



President
Marian B. Sides, Ph.D.
Grayslake, IL 60030

320 South Henry Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3579
Phone: 703-739-2240
Fax: 703-739-9652
www.asma.org

Executive Director
Jeffrey C. Sventek, MS, CAsP
Association Home Office

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The nearly 2,700 members of the Aerospace Medical Association wish to express our sincere sympathies to the people in Japan suffering from the devastating effects of the earthquake and resulting tsunami that occurred on March 11, 2011.

As medical professionals and scientists, we understand the difficult medical and public health burdens the people of Japan must manage. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this time of tragedy.

The Aerospace Medical Association has reviewed the possible effects of the radiation being released by the damaged nuclear power facilities and the potential health effects on commercial aircrew and passengers flying in and around Japan. Currently, there is very little risk to commercial aircrew and passengers from these leaks. NASA scientist, Dr. Christopher J. Mertens, recently stated "for the short-lived radionuclides released in atmospheric aerosols, the main pathway to human exposure is transfer of the radionuclides to vegetation, which are consumed directly or through consumption of contaminated meat or milk. For the long-lived radionuclides, the main pathway to human exposure is transfer processes leading to radionuclide deposition in soil, and then transfer to food. Any gamma radiation emitted by the reactor is rapidly attenuated with increasing altitude. At this time, there is very little risk to no risk at all to commercial aircrew and passengers."

The World Health Organization has posted an excellent set of Frequently Asked Questions related to the nuclear radiation issues associated with the Japanese nuclear power facilities. These FAQs can be found at <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/jpn/faqs/en/index.html>. We strongly urge all with concerns about the health effects of radiation exposure to review these FAQs.

The Aerospace Medical Association will continue to monitor the dynamic situation in Japan and we will provide updates as necessary. Anyone traveling to or from Japan should follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization and their national government.

JEFFREY C. SVENTEK, MS, CAsP
Executive Director