

# Radiation Safety Counseling News

## Real and Perceived Dangers

Dear Reader,

Although the media focus on the nuclear reactor crisis in Japan has diminished there continues to be concern among many about the real effects of radiation from the incident. On May 16, 2011 I made a presentation at the American Industrial Hygiene Conference and Expo (AIHce) on Japan Nuclear Fears - Real and Perceived Dangers.

Below is the abstract of that presentation and a link to the presentation materials available on our website along with a link to coverage of the talk by a reporter from EHSToday.

As always, I invite your feedback including any questions that you may have. You can send comments or questions via email or contact us on Facebook or our Forum (blog). I will be delighted to hear from you.

Regards,  
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Radiation Safety Counseling Services

### Japan Nuclear Fears - Real and Perceived Dangers

The earthquake and tsunami in Japan, with subsequent damage to several nuclear plants, have given the media a new source of alarming news about perceived dangers of radiation. The media and antinuclear advocates now have a great opportunity to speculate about deadly radiation not only in Japan but wherever nuclear plants are located. The evolving drama of the nuclear plants lends itself to daily news events while the earthquake and tsunami become old news. The question is, however, how much of the response by authorities and the public is based on real versus perceived dangers? Based on what we know of radiation effects, it is likely that either none or very few deaths will be traced directly to the Japan nuclear incidents. And yet, fears of radiation are rampant, not only in Japan, but in other countries including the U.S.

On the other hand, psychologists know that fear is a good thing as a natural response of our



Ray Johnson

We are on



We have created a Facebook page for the Radiation Safety Counseling Institute. This is another resource for the sharing of radiation safety related information and questions.

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#### Got Questions?

If you have a question about radiation safety that you would like to share, please post your question on our Forum (blog) or our Facebook page. Each week our experts will select a question and post an answer that will also be included in our monthly newsletter.

To post a question go to:  
[Radiation Safety Forum](#)  
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brains for our protection. We have survived as a species by knowing when to be afraid and when to react for safety. Psychologists define fear as an emotional response to a specific stimulus, such as pain or immediate threat of real danger. Since radiation does not produce any sensation in our bodies, then our fears of radiation have to be based on imagination. Thus, fear of radiation is not a true fear based on something happening right now (real danger), but a manufactured fear based on images of terrible consequences (perceived danger).

Regulators in Japan and the U.S. may be driven by many fears (what if they are not seen as responsive to scared constituents, what if they do not provide for adequate safety measures, what if people are harmed from their negligence, etc.?). Radiation safety professionals may also be driven by fears as well, such as fear of criticism for not doing their jobs well, irresponsibility, carelessness, or neglect. Thus the profession of radiation safety is built around fears. Even the words which describe our work "radiation safety" imply that there is something to be afraid of, something to be avoided, something for which caution is needed, or something which threatens us.

Presentation handouts for this talk are available on our website at <http://radiationcounseling.org/docs/JapanFears.pdf>

This presentation was also reported on in ***EHSToday***. [Click here](#) to read more (after viewing their advertisement).

## Communication Insights

Each week, we post another installment of guidance to improve communication with others. To stay informed, you can go to our [blog](#) and click on Follow: RSS, then choose to "Subscribe to this Feed".

You can also go to our [Facebook](#) page and choose "Like" to have our status updates displayed on your Facebook wall.

We hope you find this information helpful and welcome your comments, questions, or other feedback.

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