

Japan after Fukushima: Ex-top U.S. nuclear regulator counsels end to atomic power

Tuesday 8 October 2013, by [NAGATA Kazuaki](#) (Date first published: 24 September 2013).

The ongoing crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 plant is a sign that the world needs to seriously rethink nuclear safety and consider possibly ending its dependence on atomic power, the former chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission said Tuesday in Tokyo.

“When you look at what happened around the Fukushima Daiichi (No. 1) area, it’s simply unacceptable,” as tens of thousands of people have been unable to return to their homes due to radioactive contamination, said Gregory Jaczko, who served as the top U.S. nuclear regulatory official for nearly three years until July 2012.

Given that Japan is extremely prone to earthquakes and tsunami, among other disasters, using nuclear power poses serious risks unless some kind of new technology is created to completely eliminate the possibility of severe accidents, Jaczko told reporters at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan.

However, Jaczko also said that creating such zero-risk technology is next to impossible.

Instead, Jaczko said, he hopes Japan pours its resources and energy into coming up with ways to function without atomic power.

“I think the Japanese people have the ability to do that,” he said.

While Japan’s atomic watchdog, the Nuclear Regulation Authority, is now examining requests from utilities to restart reactors, Jaczko stressed the importance of getting the public actively involved in the process.

“There needs to be a thorough public debate and a public dialogue to ensure that those decisions” have received as much support from the public as possible, said Jaczko, who headed the NRC when the Fukushima crisis erupted on March 11, 2011.

As for the ongoing issue of tainted groundwater flowing into the ocean at the No. 1 plant, Jaczko expressed befuddlement that the issue has only recently come under the spotlight.

“This was known from the beginning that there would potentially be these contamination problems,” he said.

Kazuaki Nagata, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, September 24, 2013

P.S.

*

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/09/24/national/ex-top-u-s-nuclear-regulator-counsels-end-to-atomic-power/#.UkjN8H9jbRY>