

Soviet press says little on disaster

MOSCOW (AP) — The Soviet Union on Tuesday struggled to contain a nuclear power plant disaster that may have affected thousands of people and the controlled Soviet press maintained strict control of information about the accident.

After the initial, four-sentence report by the official news agency Tass on Monday night, the Soviet news media were silent for 24 hours about an accident that may have melted the core of a Ukrainian nuclear reactor and sent a radioactive cloud rolling across hundreds of miles of Russian plains.

The first report by Tass was issued hours after Scandinavian countries detected increased radiation and said the radiation ap-

parently came from the Soviet Union.

Tass said the accident was at the Chernobyl plant, but did not say the accident occurred only 60 miles from Kiev, a city of 2.4 million people. The report did not say what happened, when it happened, mention whether there were casualties or discuss possible risks to health.

The report was read on the main TV news program Monday night and there was no new information issued until nearly 24 hours later when Tass issued a second government statement saying two people were killed and that people had been evacuated from four towns in the area.

That report said the radiation from the damaged plant had been contained.

Soviets call for foreign aid to fight fire

MOSCOW (AP) — The Soviet Union struggled Tuesday to cope with one of history's gravest nuclear catastrophes, appealing for foreign help to fight a reactor fire and evacuating thousands of people from the imperiled countryside.

In its first report on casualties, the Soviet government said the Ukrainian nuclear plant disaster killed two people and injured an unspecified number of others.

A radioactive cloud loosed by the

accident shifted, meanwhile, from Scandinavia back toward Central Europe.

Poland ordered emergency measures, and European political leaders angrily demanded that Moscow explain why it did not quickly alert the rest of the world to the disaster, an apparent reactor meltdown believed to have occurred late last week.

Some called on the Soviets to shut down all their nuclear plants until

international inspections could be carried out.

The Soviet government claimed the "radiation situation" had been stabilized at the damaged Chernobyl plant, 450 miles southwest of Moscow. But Swedish officials said the Soviets had asked the Stockholm government for information on combating nuclear-plant fires, indicating continuing serious problems.

The official Soviet news media provided only sketchy accounts of

the accident. Other reports, however, drew a picture of hurried exodus from the affected area, but seeming unconcern in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, just 60 miles away.

A West German technician working at the Chernobyl facility said an 18-mile security zone had been established around the damaged plant, the Danish state radio reported. Truck convoys were streaming north from the area, near the Dnieper River, said Swedish radio.

Swedish experts say core meltdown occurred

STOCKHOLM, Sweden (AP) — Swedish experts on Tuesday said radiation blown over northern Europe indicates a core meltdown at a crippled Soviet nuclear plant.

Radioactivity levels in the Nordic countries rose to as much as six times above normal Sunday, but were declining Tuesday. Swedish weather

experts said wind shifts were taking any further radiation into Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Bengt Pettersson of Sweden's Nuclear Power Inspection Board told a news conference that the concentration and composition of radioactive fallout measured in Scandinavia indicated a core meltdown, one of the

most dangerous accidents possible in a nuclear power plant.

Scandinavian officials also complained about Soviet handling of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, about 60 miles from Kiev.

Danish Prime Minister Poul Schluter, the first Nordic leader to

publicly criticize Soviet handling of the accident, said it was "totally insufficient" that the Soviet Union had not warned that the radioactivity was coming until it was detected in the West on Sunday.

"It shouldn't be that way in a modern society," he said.

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