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# Uranium spill injures three

TOKAIMURA, Japan (AP) — Nuclear officials scrambled today to find a way to stop an uncontrolled nuclear reaction at a uranium processing plant, which seriously injured three workers and possibly contaminated dozens.

More than 310,000 people within six miles of the plant were ordered today to stay in their homes. The facility, which refines uranium so it can be used to fuel nuclear power plants, is located in Tokaimura, a town of 33,000 people 70 miles northeast of Tokyo.

Government officials said yesterday's accident spewed a gas containing alpha, beta and gamma radiation into the atmosphere, forcing the evacuation of 150 neighbors of the plant. The plant was not designed to block the escape of radiation, company officials said.

Two of the three injured workers were in critical condition from the radiation, estimated at about 4,000 times the level considered safe for a person to receive in a year, said hospital official Yukio Kamakura. Never before has a nuclear accident in Japan caused such serious injuries.

A team was removing water from the cooling equipment around the tank early today in hopes that it would suppress further nuclear fission, Science and Technology Agency official Eiichiro Watanabe said.



AP

atomic bomb. Water stimulates spurring along the reaction.

At least 34 workers other than the one being examined for possible contamination, said a spokesman for the company that runs the plant, said by Sumitomo Metal Mining Co., one of the largest business groups.

Five residents were exposed to radiation, a local official said on condition of anonymity. "This is something that Japan has never experienced," government spokesman Ka said late Thursday. The radiation from the plant does not pose a significant health risk, the nuclear reaction were to continue, he added.

Radioactivity levels — at one time several times above normal at the plant — several hours after the accident. An official government reading was released late Thursday. State officials said radiation levels were several times above normal 1.25 miles from the plant.

Major highways into town were closed. Smaller roads had electronic billboards telling motorists to pass through the area as possible. Train services were stopped in the area, Kyodo News service reported.

Nuclear fission happens when neutrons hit uranium, causing atoms to split, releasing huge amounts of energy. It is the principle behind the

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# Earthquake rattles Mexico's Pacific coast

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A strong earthquake along the Pacific coast rattled much of Mexico on yesterday, killing at least 10 people and damaging hundreds of buildings.

The U.S. Geological Survey in Golden, Colo., said the magnitude-7.5 quake was centered between the Pacific resorts of Huatulco and Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca state, 280 miles south of Mexico City.

"It was very intense. There was panic because we haven't ever felt anything of this magnitude," said Norma Alquira, a spokesperson for Puerto Escondido.

Fifteen buildings were damaged in the city of 18,000 people, and one person was killed by falling debris. Huatulco's mayor reported only minor damage and "normal panic."

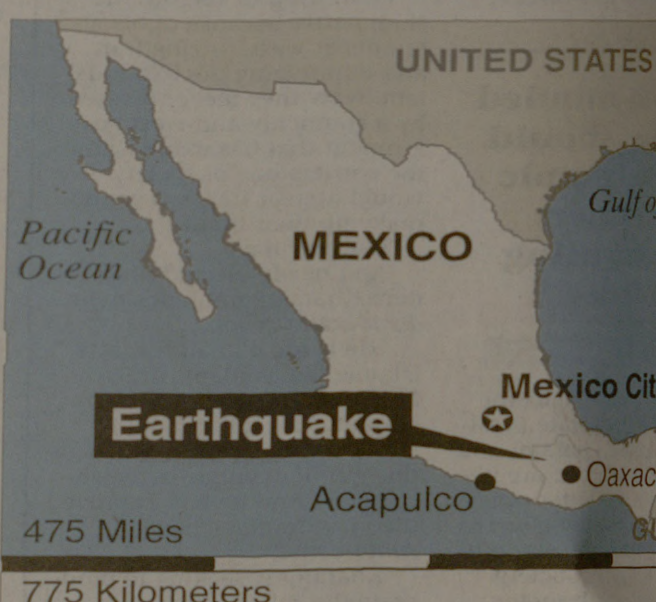
At least nine people died elsewhere in the state, according to the state government.

In the state capital of Oaxaca City, two people huddling in a doorway were killed when it collapsed, and two more died under falling debris while fleeing a building.

State officials said four people were killed by collapsing buildings in rural communities. No-timex, the government news agency, reported a 12-year-old girl suffered a heart attack and died because of the quake.

The Oaxaca governor's office said about 20 people were hospitalized with injuries suffered in the quake.

The force and unusual length of the quake, which struck at 11:31 a.m. (12:31 p.m. EDT) and lasted several minutes, terrified people hundreds of miles from the epicenter. It was felt as far south as Guatemala and very strongly in Mexico City to the north.



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