

## Two injured in fire at nuclear power plant in Japan

*Nothing to do with the nuclear reactors but it gives the reporter the opportunity to review all incidents at nuclear plants: nuclear and non-nuclear.*

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A fire broke out at a nuclear power plant in western Japan on Wednesday, but there was no radiation leakage, authorities said. Two workers were injured.

It took firefighters in protective suits nearly two hours to reach the flames because of thick smoke, and another two hours to put out the **blaze at a non-nuclear waste-incinerating facility** at Oi power plant in Fukui prefecture, according to local officials.

Two workers who were inspecting the facility were rushed to a hospital after inhaling smoke, but they were not in critical condition and were not exposed to radiation, fire official Nobuyuki Matsuyoshi quoted paramedics as saying.

A third worker was evacuated from the site but was not injured, and other workers at the plant were allowed to remain at their stations, according to Matsuyoshi.

All four pressurised water reactors at Oi, about 380km west of Tokyo, were operating normally and there was no radiation leakage, operator Kansai Electric Power said.

Smoke poured out of a waste-incinerating facility between the number-three and number-four reactors at the power plant at about 9.40am GMT. The fire was finally put out more than four hours later.

The cause of the blaze was still under investigation, but flames seemed to have come from an area in the facility where ash is packed into steel barrels, according to Manabu Kobana of operator Kansai. Some of the waste processed there contained very low levels of radiation, but monitors outside the facility have shown no signs of radiation leakage, Kobana said.

Resource-poor Japan is heavily dependent on its nuclear programme, with the country's 55 nuclear reactors now supplying about one-third of its electricity, according to the Natural Resources and Energy Agency.

The government has said it wants to build 11 new plants and raise electricity output generated by nuclear power to nearly 40% of the national supply by 2010.

But the public has been increasingly wary of reactor safety following a series of reactor malfunctions and accidents.

In 2004, five workers were killed when a corroded pipe at a reactor in western Japan ruptured and sprayed plant workers with boiling water and steam in the country's worst nuclear plant accident to date.

No radiation escaped from that reactor, which was allowed to resume operations in December last year.

In 1999, a radiation leak at a fuel-reprocessing plant north-east of Tokyo killed two workers and triggered the evacuation of thousands of residents. That accident was

caused by two workers who tried to save time by mixing excessive amounts of uranium in buckets instead of using special mechanised tanks. -- Sapa-AP