

Subject: No nuclear risk to North Pacific fish

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Officials: No nuclear risk to North Pacific fish

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- ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- North Pacific fish are so unlikely to be contaminated by radioactive material from the crippled nuclear plant in Japan that there's no reason to test them, according to federal and state of Alaska health officials.

Dangerous levels of radiation have been reported off the coast from the Fukushima reactor complex. However, a spokeswoman for the federal Food and Drug Administration told the Anchorage Daily News that the ocean is so huge, and Alaska fisheries so far away, that there is no realistic threat.

Alaska's food safety program manager, Ron Klein of the Department of Environmental Conservation, said the FDA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have demonstrated that Alaskans have no cause for worry.

"Based on the work they're doing, no sampling or monitoring of our fish is necessary," he said.

Alaska is the nearest U.S. state to Japan. Fish caught by U.S. fishermen in the 200-mile economic zone swim even closer. That has prompted some fears, particularly in Europe, that Alaska fish could be contaminated.

Tyson Fick, spokesman for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, said he's urging fishermen and consumers to look at the science conducted by federal agencies. In Germany and Austria, he said, Alaska fish may have gotten caught up in anti-nuclear politics.

The FDA has not been testing U.S. fish.

"We've been working with NOAA to keep an eye on U.S. waters, to see if there is any cause for alarm, and we do have the capability to begin testing if that does occur," she said.

NOAA fisheries spokeswoman Kate Naughton declined to answer questions and referred a reporter back to DeLancey and the EPA.

DeLancey said that so far, there's no reason for concern about Fukushima. The radioactive materials in the water near Fukushima quickly become diluted in the massive volume of the Pacific, she said. Fallout that lands on the surface tends to stay there, giving the most unstable ones isotopes, such as iodine, time to decay before reaching fish, she said.

Some imported fish are tested, she said, but those also appear safe.
