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Water Contamination Due To Radioactive 'Fall-Out' Here No Hazard To Humans

— Decontamination Process Discussed —

Japan was reassured Thursday that there was little to worry about the possible radiation contamination of the water supply resulting from an atomic "fall-out," inasmuch as it is "far below any level of hazard to human health."

The reassurance came from Dr. Merrill Eisenbud at the fourth-day session of the five-day Japan-U.S. radiobiological conference.

Dr. Eisenbud explained the amount of radioactive substance in the water supply was far below any danger level, because the natural forces, time and biological factors quickly decontaminate the water reservoirs.

Extensive research on the decontamination process of water supply, he pointed out, was recently conducted by Harvard University in the water supply reservoirs of Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Rochester, New York. Similar studies were carried out by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission has experimented with a variety of more rapid artificial decontamination methods. In experiments at Los Alamos, New Mexico, one process removed 95 per cent of the radioactivity injected into the water supply, and at Boston, the experimental result scored a 50 per cent decontamination, he said.

The comparative ease with which the decontamination process works out was also agreed on by the Japanese radiobiology experts participating in the conference.

Dr. Tajima reported that as much as 90 per cent of the radioactive substance in the water could be wiped out by using charcoal and sand as filter.

The prescription given by Dr. W. Claus for decontaminating human skin from radioactivity drew considerable attention.

Dr. Claus' formula was brief and simple, "Wash with copious quantities of soap and water, using a mild abrasive if necessary to loosen sticky contamination," he said. He reported corn meal is usually used in the U.S. for this purpose.

Asked if the formula will be applied to the decontamination of vegetables, he answered the same method would do, and that many vegetables could be decontaminated by peeling or removing outer leaves.

As for counter-measures to be applied when radioactivity has been accidentally swallowed with water or food, Drs. Eisenbud and M. Nakaizumi verbally reached an agreement about the advisability of administering EDTA as rapidly as the situation permits.

EDTA is the common chemical name used for the substance. It was explained that a quick administration would remove plutonium or strontium from the human body or body of animal through excretion.

Later in the afternoon, Dr. Hiyama introduced his own theory regarding the contamination of the sea and its fauna and flora.

His theory was based largely on the extensive research works conducted by Japanese scientists aboard the Government-chartered scientific expedition vessel "Shunkotsu Maru" in the Pacific last summer.

Both Japanese and American conferees attended a reception given by U.S. Ambassador John M. Allison at his official residence following the adjournment of the day's session.

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