

3 nuclear reactors melted down after quake, Japan confirms

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Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant experienced full meltdowns at three reactors in the wake of an earthquake and tsunami in March, the country's Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters said Monday.

The nuclear group's new evaluation, released Monday, goes further than previous statements in describing the extent of the damage caused by an earthquake and tsunami on March 11.

Tokyo Electric avoided using the term "meltdown," and says it was keeping the remnants of the core cool. But U.S. experts interviewed by CNN after the company's announcement in May said that while it may have been containing the situation, the damage had already been done.

"On the basis of what they showed, if there's not fuel left in the core, I don't know what it is other than a complete meltdown," said Gary Was, a University of Michigan nuclear engineering professor and CNN consultant. And given the damage reported at the other units, "It's hard to imagine the scenarios can differ that much for those reactors."

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