

Zama Briefs

Driving reminders

All DoD cardholders and master labor contract employees must comply with the following regulations when driving on U.S. military installations in Japan:

- Bicycle riders must wear an approved helmet with the chin strap fastened at all times. Riders must comply with traffic regulations, which include stopping at stop signs and yielding the right-of-way when required.

- The use of headphones or earphones while driving, walking, jogging, skating or bicycling on installation roads and streets is prohibited.

- Operators of two-wheeled cycles propelled by a motor must wear the required personal protection equipment as follows: Riders will wear helmets that are properly fastened under the chin, and the helmet must meet approved safety standards, which can be identified by locating the certification tag within the helmet shell.

- Riders will wear shatter-resistant goggles or a full face shield that is properly attached to the helmet. The windscreen alone does not meet the proper eye protection requirement.

- Riders will wear a long-sleeve shirt or jacket, full-length trousers and full-fingered gloves or mittens. Leather boots or over-the-ankle shoes must be worn. A brightly colored outer garment must be worn during the day and a reflective upper garment must be worn at night and during times of reduced visibility.

- All motor vehicle operators must wear a seatbelt.

- Refrain from drinking heavily the night before your work day. Remember that one alcoholic beverage will render the average-sized individual legally drunk under Japanese law.

- All drivers must come to a full and complete stop at yield and stop signs when crossing traffic is present.

Army Suggestion Program

The Army Suggestion Program, previously known as the Army Ideas for Excellence Program, has gone online. The new suggestion-processing program was unveiled on Army Knowledge Online.

Anyone with an AKO username and password can now submit suggestions electronically. Detailed guidance is provided at <https://armysuggestions.army.mil>.

There are several advantages to this program, the biggest one being that anyone with access to the Internet can make a suggestion from wherever they are. There is no longer a need to wait until you return to your home station to write and submit an idea. Once submitted, the suggestion is processed entirely online.

For further information, contact program administrator Keith Simon via email at keith.simon@us.army.mil or by phone at 263-5129. An alternate point of contact is Masao Naito, who can be contacted via email at masao.naito@us.army.mil or by phone at 263-5634.

PACOM surgeon leads town hall, assures community Japan is safe

By Dustin Perry
Torii Editor

A panel of scientific experts, led by the U.S. Pacific Command's top surgeon, was at Camp Zama on July 20 to reassure the community here that Japan is and remains safe following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

The visit was a town hall forum in which Rear Adm. Michael H. Mittelman provided attendees with an update on the many ongoing health and safety measurements being taken across the country and on military and Department of Defense installations.

"All of our lives changed last March," Mittelman told the crowd. "Our focus at PACOM was on the health and welfare of all of our active-duty personnel, all of their families, and everybody else who works here for DoD in Japan. We're here [today] to reassure you that everything is fine here, from an environmental and health care perspective."

Mittelmann and the panel's visit to Camp Zama was part of a tour that included stops at many other military installations in Japan. He was joined by representatives from the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute in Bethesda, Md., a nuclear specialist assigned to U.S. Forces Japan, and the commander of the Japan District Veterinary Command.

A prominent portion of Mittelman's address included the announcement of an AFRRI-led plan to calculate and assess the approximate level of radiation of the 61,000 U.S. personnel living and working in Japan. The figures will be based on a variety of data to include geographical location, length of time spent in Japan following March 11, and respective environmental radiation readings of the air, water and soil. The information will be included in a person's electronic medical records and available for their retrieval sometime within the next 16 to 18 months – even if they leave Japan during that timeframe, the AFRRI director said.

"We've been involved with the response to this incident from the beginning, [and] we've been monitoring all of the data that has been coming in," said Col. Mark Melanson, an expert in radiation and radiation-related health effects. "We're doing this because this is a unique situation and we want to provide you with ... this information."

Though the situation at the damaged Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant has improved significantly in the last four months, concerns about radiation exposure remain prevalent among U.S. personnel in Japan. Throughout the relief effort known as "Operation Tomodachi," nearly 8,000 U.S. servicemembers who took part were later tested for radiation levels. The results were overwhelmingly reassuring, said Mittelman.

"We looked at personnel who were working in what we call the 'warm and hot zone,' which is the 125 nautical miles from the Fukushima reactor," said Mittelman.



Photo by Dustin Perry

Rear Adm. Michael H. Mittelman, center, speaks to community members at Camp Zama during a town hall meeting July 20. He and a panel of military and civilian experts answered questions and asserted the safety of Japan following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, as well as lingering concerns about radioactivity levels.

"We're here [today] to reassure you that everything is fine here, from an environmental and health care perspective."

– Rear Adm. Michael H. Mittelman,
Command Surgeon, U.S. Pacific Command

"It's amazing what we found – because [we found] nothing.

"Ninety-eight percent of the people who were screened had no detectable radiation exposure whatsoever," he added. "Two percent had the equivalent of about two and a half X-rays, which is not very much. The science tells us what we intuitively knew – that everything is safe."

Further assurance on the stability of the situation at Fukushima was given by Navy Capt. Reid Tanaka, a specialist assigned to USFJ. He made note of the GOJ's announcement the day before that they had achieved "Step One" in their repair efforts, which included a circulation system that pumps cooling water into the reactors and does not allow the escape of any radioactive elements into the environment.

"The Tokyo Electric Power Company has the best plan-ahead that the smartest minds around the world could come up with," said Tanaka. "The workers have been working – initially in the cold, and now in the heat – in full suits and respirators, working this every day making inches in the battle for a mile. Our assessment is they're about as stable as they can be."

Concerns about the safety and edibility of food and drink products both on and off military installations in Japan were addressed by Lt. Col. Margery Hanfelt, the JDVC commander. Her team of Soldiers and specialists has conducted more than

7,000 readings to date, checking everything from air and water quality to the food sold at commissaries and served at food courts, community clubs and military dining facilities.

"The food on the installation is safe," said Hanfelt. "The food safety inspections have been occurring, and they will continue to occur – we're at commissaries, we're at food-receipt sites, and we're at the delivery trucks.

"And what about if you eat off the installation?" she added. "I have looked through the Japanese testing results, I have met with [Government of Japan] officials on the food safety side, and I have looked at reams of test results. I have every confidence in what the Japanese government is doing for food safety right now, and I continue to have that confidence."

Following the town hall, Mittelman again reiterated his stance that Japan is a safe place to live and work. He also praised the respective U.S. military command teams throughout the country for working hard to instill a sense of security within their communities.

"The credit goes to the command structure here at Camp Zama, because I think prepping the community over the course of 'Tomodachi' has made a big difference," said Mittelman. "You can tell that they're well-informed, comfortable and safe. All we did was come and validate that for them."