

## **I pledge my honor I have abided by the Stevens Honor System**

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### *TEPCO Management and Their Role in the Fukushima Disaster*

The situation on March 11, 2011, resulting from an earthquake and tsunami that proceeded to dismantle the eastern shore of Japan, was greatly impacted by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). Preceding the March 11 events, the facilities that housed the Daiichi and Daini plants were inadequate to handle major flooding should any occur, due to the fact that the sites had been built based on tsunami and earthquake data from the 1960s, and had countermeasures to match this outdated information instead. TEPCO continued to operate the Daiichi plant in spite of the outdated conditions based on said assumptions from the 1960s, failing to consider the potential vulnerabilities that the power plants they managed had to any serious flooding. Even with more recent in-house reports that assessed the possibility of the plants being able to withstand severe earthquakes and tsunamis, TEPCO higher ups remained ignorant, with the studies conducted in the early 2000s being dismissed by TEPCO as unrealistic and non-verifiable. These oversights alone could be considered enough to blame the incident on TEPCO. In spite of this, efforts were made to deflect blame while only taking responsibility for some of the failures – a ridiculous action for such a serious event, considering they dismissed the possibility of large tsunamis as impossible prior to the March 11 earthquake. Furthermore, the severity of the situation in Daiichi 1, 2 and 3 was minimized when TEPCO directed their employees to refrain from using the term “core meltdown” when describing the situation to the media. TEPCO management effectively obstructed both public awareness and the distribution of information to government officials in order to avoid any opprobrium and acquit themselves from having any impact on the situation, with TEPCO president Naomi Hirose even labeling their actions as an intentional means of suppression. With such a serious disaster, clarity is

extremely important in providing a proper response. Unfortunately, the careless measures taken by TEPCO executives likely worsened the incident due to the fact that they prevented both the Japanese and US governments from being able to properly assist them. The fact that they were willing to ignore their own data and minimize the seriousness of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Station implies they should be held criminally responsible in regards to the accident. This says little of TEPCO's own decisions to deliberately pump radioactive water into the Pacific, which could also be seen as a negligent move on the company's part. Their record only continued to downspiral when TEPCO lied yet again to the public, claiming that the plants were no longer leaking radioactive materials as of July, 2013. In spite of these claims, local fishermen and scientists continued to report detecting leaks. As a result of these actions, I see the Tokyo Electric Power Company as a guilty entity that should be held responsible for the Fukushima incident. Through their own unjust methods, their involvement in the situation was greatly nullified, even though they evidently played a major role in the severity of the accident. TEPCO did not deserve to be sympathized and given shared responsibility by the Japanese government, which ultimately reduced their prominence in the situation. TEPCO not only lied to the public numerous times, but rejected input that could have greatly alleviated the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Station on March 11, 2011. In comparison, were the same incident to occur with an American company and power plant, such actions would have led to much greater consequences, with Three Mile Island being a notable example. Thus, TEPCO should be held just as responsible as any other organization whose role is to safely generate nuclear energy for public use.