

= Denn? Senshi Porygon =

" Denn? Senshi Porygon " (??????????? , Denn? Senshi Porygon , translated as " Cyber Soldier Porygon " , although more commonly " Electric Soldier Porygon ") is the thirty @-@ eighth episode of the Pokémon anime 's first season . Its only broadcast was in Japan on December 16 , 1997 . In the episode , Ash and his friends find at the local Pokémon Center that there is something wrong with the Poké Ball transmitting device . To find out what is wrong , they must go inside the machine .

The episode is infamous for certain repetitive visual effects which induced photosensitive epileptic seizures in a substantial number of Japanese viewers , an incident referred to as the " Pokémon Shock " (????????? , Pokemon Shokku) by the Japanese press . As a result of the seizures 685 viewers were taken to hospitals ; 2 people remained hospitalized for more than two weeks . Due to this , the episode has not been rebroadcast worldwide . After the incident , the Pokémon anime went into a four @-@ month hiatus , and it returned on TV Tokyo in April 16 , 1998 , thus making the episode perhaps the most controversial episode of the entire Pokémon series . Since then , the episode has been parodied and referenced in cultural media , including The Simpsons and South Park .

= = Plot = =

Ash , Misty , Brock and Pikachu discover that the system used to transfer Pokémon from one Pokémon Center to the other is malfunctioning . On Nurse Joy 's request , they go to Professor Akihabara , the one who created the Poké Ball transfer system . He tells them that Team Rocket stole his prototype Porygon , a digital Pokémon that can exist in cyberspace , and is using it to steal trainers ' Pokémon from inside the computer system .

Akihabara sends Ash , Misty , Brock , Pikachu and his second Porygon into the system to stop Team Rocket , whom they learn have set up a blockade that stops Pokéballs from traveling the network . Porygon is able to defeat Team Rocket 's Porygon , but Nurse Joy , monitoring the situation and unaware that Ash and the others are inside , has sent an anti @-@ virus program into the system to combat what she thinks is a computer virus . Pikachu uses a Thunderbolt attack on the program , which manifests as " vaccine missiles " , which causes an explosion . The group and Team Rocket successfully escape the computer , and with Team Rocket 's blockade removed , the system returns to normal .

= = Reception and controversy = =

" Denn? Senshi Porygon " aired in Japan on December 16 , 1997 at 6 : 30 PM Japan Standard Time (09 : 30 UTC) . The episode , which was broadcast over thirty @-@ seven TV stations that Tuesday night , held the highest ratings for its time slot , and was watched by approximately 4 @.@ 6 million households .

Twenty minutes into the episode , there is a scene in which Pikachu stops " vaccine " missiles with its Thunderbolt attack , resulting in a huge explosion that flashes red and blue lights . Although there were similar parts in the episode with red and blue flashes , two anime techniques , " paka paka " and " flash " made this scene extremely intense . These flashes were bright strobe lights , with blinks at a rate of about 12 Hz for approximately six seconds .

At this point , viewers started to complain of blurred vision , headaches , dizziness and nausea . Some experienced seizures , blindness , convulsions and loss of consciousness . Japan 's Fire Defense Agency reported that a total of 685 viewers ? 310 boys and 375 girls ? were taken to hospitals by ambulances . Although many victims recovered during the ambulance trip , more than 150 of them were admitted to hospitals . Two people remained hospitalized for more than two weeks . Some other people had seizures when parts of the scene were rebroadcast during news reports on the seizures . Only a small fraction of the 685 children treated were diagnosed with photosensitive epilepsy . This phenomenon was later called " Pokémon Shock " .

Later studies showed that 5 ? 10 % of the viewers had mild symptoms that did not need hospital treatment . Twelve thousand children who did not get sent to hospital by ambulance reported mild symptoms of illness ; however , their symptoms more closely resembled mass hysteria than a grand mal seizure . A study following 103 patients over three years after the event found that most of them had no further seizures . Scientists believe that the flashing lights triggered photosensitive seizures in which visual stimuli such as flashing lights can cause altered consciousness . Although approximately 1 in 4 @,@ 000 people are susceptible to these types of seizures , the number of people affected by this Pokémon episode was unprecedented .

An article in USA Today reassured parents that " American children aren 't likely to suffer seizures provoked by TV cartoons " , because U.S. networks " don 't air the graphic Japanese cartoons known as ' anime ' " with their " fast @-@ paced style of animation " , although anime has become more prevalent on American television since then . The incident , which was referred to as the " Pokémon Shock " (????????? , Pokemon Shokku) by the Japanese press , was included in the 2004 edition and the 2008 Gamer 's Edition of the Guinness World Records book , with the honor of holding the record for " Most Photosensitive Epileptic Seizures Caused by a Television Show " .

= = Aftermath = =

News of the incident spread quickly through Japan . The following day the television station that had originated the lone broadcast of that episode , TV Tokyo , issued an apology to the Japanese people , suspended the program , and said it would investigate the cause of the seizures . Officers from Atago Police stations were ordered by Japan 's National Police Agency to question the anime 's producers about the show 's contents and production process . An emergency meeting was held by the Ministry of Health , Labour and Welfare , in which the case was discussed with experts and information collected from hospitals . Video retailers all over Japan removed the Pokémon anime from their rental shelves .

Reaction was swift on the Tokyo Stock Exchange , and Nintendo 's shares went down 400 yen (almost 5 %) the following morning to 12 @,@ 200 yen as news of the incident spread . Nintendo produces the game upon which the Pokémon anime series is based . Then @-@ president of Nintendo , Hiroshi Yamauchi , said at a press conference the day after the episode had aired that the video game company was not responsible since the original Pokémon game for its Game Boy product was presented in black and white .

After the airing of " Denn? Senshi Porygon " , the Pokémon anime went into a four @-@ month hiatus until it returned in April 16 , 1998 with airing of " Pikachu 's Goodbye " and " The Battling Eevee Brothers " . After the hiatus , the time slot changed from Tuesday to Thursday . The opening theme was also redone , and black screens showing various Pokémon in spotlights were broken up into four images per screen . Before the seizure incident , the opening was originally one Pokémon image per screen . Before the resumption of broadcast , " Problem Inspection Report on Pocket Monster Animated Series " (??? ?????????????????? , Anime Poketto Monsut? Mondai Kensh? H?koku) was shown . Broadcast in Japan on April 16 , 1998 , host Miyuki Yadama went over the circumstances of the program format and the on @-@ screen advisories at the beginning of animated programs , as well as showing letters and fan drawings sent in by viewers , most of whom were concerned that the incident would lead to the anime being cancelled . Many Japanese television broadcasters and medical officials came together to find ways to make sure the incident was not repeated . They established a series of guidelines for future animated programs , including :

Flashing images , especially those with red , should not flicker faster than three times per second . If the image does not have red , it still should not flicker faster than five times per second .

Flashing images should not be displayed for a total duration of more than two seconds .

Stripes , whirls and concentric circles should not take up a large part of the television screen .

This episode kept the episodes " Rougela 's Christmas " (" Holiday Hi @-@ Jynx ") and " Iwark as a Bivouac " (" Snow Way Out ! ") off their original broadcast date in Japan following the incident . Those two episodes were about to air after " Denn? Senshi Porygon " on December 23 , 1997 and

January 6 , 1998 respectively . They were eventually only aired on October 5 , 1998 as an hour @-@ long special . Airing out of order caused confusion to viewers because Ash still had a Charmander instead of Charizard , and Misty did not have Togepi yet , but Starmie and Horsea . Also , a New Year special was about to air between these episodes on December 30 , 1997 , but it was cancelled after TV Tokyo pulled any mention of Pokémon from their channel following the incident .

To prevent any similar incidents from reoccurring , Nintendo quickly ordered the episode pulled , and it has not aired since , not even outside Japan . Maddie Blaustein , the English dub voice of Meowth , has said twice on the Serebii.net forums that this episode was dubbed in the United States by 4Kids Entertainment . On the other hand , Veronica Taylor , the English voice of Ash , claimed that this episode was never dubbed and will not be dubbed . Regardless , any plans to release this episode outside Japan were abandoned after Nintendo objected , and it was never broadcast anywhere else in the world . Coincidentally , the episode aired around the same time Pokémon was being adapted for American audiences . 4Kids Entertainment took extra precaution in bright and flashing lights in the show , altering lighting and the frequency of flashing lights for earlier episodes of their American release .

In an effort to put the event out of the public 's minds and prevent trauma , the anime has not featured Porygon in any subsequent episodes . As a consequence of this , the popularity of Porygon and its derivatives among the fans of the series has suffered . However , Porygon2 and Porygon @-@ Z were featured during ' World of Pokémon ' opening of Pokémon Movie 15 . Porygon2 has also appeared in the opening song of English dubbed version of Pokémon Chronicles and Pokérap GS , which includes all Generation II Pokémon excluding Celebi .

= = Cultural impact = =

The " Pokémon Shock " incident has been parodied many times in popular culture , including an episode of The Simpsons entitled " Thirty Minutes over Tokyo " . In the episode , the Simpson family travels to Japan . When they arrive at their hotel in Tokyo , Bart is seen watching an anime entitled Battling Seizure Robots featuring robots with flashing eye lasers , and asks : " Isn 't this that cartoon that causes seizures ? " , and the flashing eyes cause him to have a seizure . Marge and Lisa are also affected and Homer walks in seeing them all convulsing on the floor and joins in .

An episode of South Park that first aired in November 1999 , called " Chinpokomon " , revolves around a Pokémon @-@ like phenomenon , called Chinpokomon , with which the children of South Park become obsessed . Chinpokomon toys and video games are sold to American children in South Park by a Japanese company . The company 's president , Mr. Hirohito , uses the toys to brainwash the American children , making them into his own army to topple the " evil " American " empire " . These toys included a video game in which the player attempts to bomb Pearl Harbor . While playing this game , Kenny has an epileptic seizure and later dies , in reference to the Pokémon seizure incident .

In the pilot episode of Drawn Together , Ling @-@ Ling , who is a parody of Pikachu , states that his goal in the Drawn Together house is to " destroy all , and give children seizures " . There follows a scene with flashing lights , a direct reference to this episode . In So Yesterday , a novel by Scott Westerfeld , this episode is mentioned and shown to one of the characters . The flashing red light that caused the seizure is also used in the story telling elements .