

## Analysis of media coverage and KINS communication activities on Fukushima accident

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### 1. Introduction

The people and mass media of Korea, the closest country to Japan, showed great interest in Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. The Korean government and KINS (Korea Institute of Nuclear Safety) attempted to provide accurate information to the press through various communication actions. In this study, we conducted an in-depth analysis of the tendencies of the press according to the accident sequence and tracked the diffusion of this issue. The purpose of this study is to determine the properties of the crisis and essence of the issue. We also carry out a general evaluation and draw implications through an analysis of the communication actions of KINS.

### 2. Media Analysis

We analyzed the media's handling of the Fukushima accident according to provider (i.e print media and broadcast media), topic and changes in the situation from March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The subjects were the major 10 newspapers (Chosun, Joongang, Dong-A, Hankyoreh, Kyunghyang, Kukmin, Munhwa, Seoul, Segye, and Hankook) and 4 TV broadcasters (MBC, SBS, KBS, and YTN). We analyzed 17,905 reports searched by keywords such as atomic energy, nuclear power plant, radioactivity, and radiation.

#### 2.1 Quantitative Analysis

Approximately 83.42% of the reports were concentrated in March and April. Daily reports peaked on 18<sup>th</sup> March with 499 articles. The quantity of daily reports decreased thereafter. The amount of reports increased rapidly, however, when new related issues arose. TV broadcasts reported more frequently on the even than newspapers; YTN accounted for 35.47% of report and Kyunghyang, one of the major newspapers, accounted for 17.31%, which was the highest among print media.

In March, corresponding with the growth and maturity stage of the issue, the situation in Japan was top on the list of media reports. In April, the focus of reporting shifted to possible radiological impacts upon Korea. May, corresponded with the declining at stage of the issue, and reporting greatly decreased.

A provider analysis study showed that reports on the situation at Fukushima from the Japanese government occupied the greatest portion. The domestic situation was meanwhile presented by the Korean government. Some of these reports quoted press releases of KINS regarding radiological impacts on Korea.

A broadcast media analysis study showed that the Hankyoreh and Kyunghyang reported on domestic radiological impacts more than other newspapers. However, in case of Hankyoreh, it devoted a small proportion of its reporting to radioactivity preventative measures.

#### 2.2 Content Analysis

The following is the issue development cycle.

Stage	Events	Date.
Accident takes place	Nuclear Power Plant Breakdown	3.11
Growth	Explosion at Fukushima Unit 1.	3.12
	Explosion at Fukushima Units 2~4	3.12~15
Maturity	Sudden rise in radioactivity level	3.16
	Diffusion of radioactivity panic	3.16~17
Decline	Diffusion of radioactivity issue (detected domestically)	3.29
	Controversy over radioactivity in rain	4.7
	Raised to top-rated nuclear accident	4.12
	Plans to establish NSSC (Nuclear Safety and Security Commission)	4.20
Extinction	Reactivating Kori unit1	5.6
	Revealed meltdown at the beginning	5.17
	Found a rabbit without ears near Fukushima	5.23
	Proposed Asia Atomic Energy Community	6.8

Table1. Issue development cycle

One of the major issues was the radiological impacts domestically. An example of the diffusion of this issue is as follows: "Radiation could not blow over to us from Japan due to the westerlies," a KMA (Korea Meteorological Administration) official said. At the end of March, however, there was controversy regarding a government announcement that radioactivity was detected throughout the county.

### 2.3 Results

The domestic media report's characteristic was 'explosive issues' which is at the beginning of issues media focused on it in the short term. In particular, the media showed the risk perception of radioactivity caused by the Fukushima accident, and there was further anxiety combined with safety concerns regarding domestic NPPs, construction of NPPs in the area, and reactivation of Kori Unit 1. However, the perception that 'radioactivity does not do much damage' was spread over time. In May, reports about Fukushima events decreased with the advent of new issues such as the death of Osama bin Laden.

Even though the mass media mainly depended on the government for information, some outlets presented different information and this caused critical reports. Furthermore, it was difficult to determine the effects and what exactly transpired at Fukushima due to the unique characteristics of nuclear events. This also led to critical reports, even in the case of relatively small mistakes.

### 3. Analysis of KINS communication actions

An 'Emergency Response Team' was set up on March 12<sup>th</sup>. It consisted of a spokesperson, two communication staffers, three monitoring staffers, and a staff member assigned to responding to questions. KINS attempted to deal with media interest, public concerns, interviews with newspapers and local media, etc.

#### 3.1 Analysis of communication actions

The following details communication actions conducted by KINS during and after Fukushima events.

Interviews: 68 TV, 48 radio, and 42 newspaper / cooperation with media 200 times (March 11<sup>th</sup>~April 30<sup>th</sup>), i.e. 4 times a day. / Held 9 press conferences / Distributed press releases 155 times.

The results of environmental radiation measurement were the most frequently provided information (about 139 times). We also supplied 6 monitoring data pertaining to environmental radiation, 5 data of dispatched experts in Japan, and 5 additional data.

We provided press releases in April 49 times, constituting the highest amount on a monthly basis. We provided fewer press releases in March but conducted various communication actions.

As the interest of the public and mass media varies temporally, it was important to make appropriate responses. To achieve this, the monitoring team at the Emergency Response Team watched the development of the events on a 24-hour basis. Based on the results of monitoring, communication staffers adjusted press

conference plans. We also strived to provide accurate information and reference information by distributing press releases frequently. We prepared a briefing room at KINS to offer convenience.

Date.	Main points
3.15	"If radiation leak gets worse, it will not have a huge impact on us."
3.22	"We will improve the safety of our nuclear power plants"
3.29	"Radiation was detected.....but it is harmless to humans."
3.30	"Inflow of plutonium has little possibility.....no impacts on human body or environment."
3.31	"We will test seawater, soil plutonium, and radioactivity of tap water."
4.4	"Do not worry about radiation; Norway's is different with the real situation's precondition."
4.6	"Possibility of radiation material inflow is low....will reinforce radiation monitoring system."
4.7	"The results of Jeju's radiation material, it does not affect us greatly"
4.13	"The results of seawater plutonium, there is no impact.....activating regular ocean radioactivity monitoring system."

Table2. Main points of press conferences

### 3.2 Results

KINS consistently provided information showing that the Fukushima events would have little effect on Koreans and would not have a major impact on the human body or environment. Moreover, we sought to respond objectively based on monitoring data of environmental radiation. The outcome of these efforts was that anxiety over radiological impacts dissipated rapidly.

### 4. Conclusion

The public has strong fear of nuclear accidents and, together with the mass media, they reacted emotionally. On the basis of this experience we have learned that we need reliability and speed, rather than quantity of information, to take the initiative. The public relations department at KINS also integrated the lessons learnt from Fukushima into developing communication strategies, as listed below:

- Defining the crisis situations
- Planning a media friendly strategy
- Activating Emergency Response System (organization and active program, measurement index).