Chernobyl Disaster

Ukraine is a country known for its fertile plains and agriculture. In 1986 the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station experienced a melt-down disaster. One-tenth of Ukraine’s land and about one million people were exposed to unsafe levels of radiation when one of its nuclear reactors exploded. Radioactive material surrounded the plant, poisoning the land and drinking water. For months after the incident, the water was unsafe to drink and fish in nearby lakes died. Radioactive material entered the air and drifted over Northern Europe and Scandinavia. Fish were not eatable for years after the meltdown. Nearby forests and trees turned brown and died and people within a thirty mile radius abandoned their homes and left. This area became known as the “exclusion zone”. Many animals died of thyroid damage…many more suffered in agony. The toll the explosion took on human life is hard to determine. Twenty eight emergency workers died from exposure to radiation. There has been an increase in cases of cancer for people who were living in the area of Chernobyl. Because of the meltdown, Ukraine’s government declared it a nuclear-free country and began shutting down its reactors. The last reactor was shut down in 2000. After the Chernobyl disaster, many countries had concerns about nuclear safety. Not all countries followed the same safety procedure. Chernobyl’s reactors were not housed in the same type of buildings other countries required.

Guided Reading Questions

1. What were some effects of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl?
2. What steps were taken by the government to make the reactor safe?
3. Why were other countries concerned about the disaster?
4. Should there be international regulations on nuclear reactors?
5. Why or why not?
6. What did many animals die of?
7. What happened to the forests?
8. Where did the radioactive material drift to after it entered the air?
9. When was the last reactor shut down?
10. What is one good thing that came out of the Chernobyl disaster?

Journal prompt- respond in 50 words- How would you feel if a nuclear disaster in another country threatened your life in the USA? What precautions can you take?

SS6G9- The student will discuss environmental issues in Europe.

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| Disaster- an event that causes great harm or danger |  | Radiation- energy emitted as nuclear particles |
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| Reactors- a devise used for the production of energy |  | Contaminated-to make corrupt, impure, or polluted |
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