Is COVID-19 winding down? Scientists say no

BY LAURA UNGAR

Kiev, Ukraine (AP) — The U.N. atomic energy agency said Russia and Ukraine must agree on a “nuclear safety and security protection zone” around the Zaporizhzhia power plant amid mounting fears the fighting could trigger a catastrophe in a country still scarred by the Chernobyl disaster.

“We are playing with fire, and something very, very catastrophic could take place,” Radoslaw Genow, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, warned at the U.N. Security Council, days after leading an inspection visit to the plant.

In a detailed report on its visit, the IAEA said shelling around the world’s largest nuclear power plant should stop immediately. This request arrived by agreement of all relevant parties to the establishment of a “nuclear safety and security protection zone” around the plant, it said.

At the Security Council meeting, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres demanded that Russia and Ukrainian forces commit to halting all military activity around the plant and agree on a “de-militarized perimeter.”

Guterres said this would include “a commitment by Russian forces to withdraw all military personnel and equipment from that perimeter and a commitment by Ukrainian forces not to move into it.”

Asked by reporters about establishing a demilitarized zone, Russian U.N. ambassador Vasily Nebenzia, said the proposal “is not serious.”

The Ukrainians will immediately step in and ruin the whole thing. We’re defending, we’re protecting the station,” he said. “In fact, it is not militarized. There is no equipment at the station. The only Russian there are guarding the plant.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy offered qualified praise for the IAEA report. In his nightly address to the nation, Zelenskyy praised the report’s “clear references” to the presence of Russian troops and military equipment at the plant. He also called for a more robust mandate for the IAEA and urged the agency to explicitly back Kyiv’s long-held claim that Russian forces need to withdraw from the facility and its surroundings.

Shelling continued around the plant on Thursday, a day after it was again knocked off Ukraine’s electricity grid and put in the precarious position of relying on its own power to run its safety systems.

Normally the plant relies on power from the outside to run the critical cooling systems that keep its reactors and its spent fuel from overheating. A loss of those systems could lead to a meltdown or other release of radiation.

“For radiation protection professionals, for the Ukrainians and even the Russian people, and those of central Europe, this is a very worrying time — and that’s an under-statement,” said Paul Dorfman, a nuclear safety expert at the University of Sussex in England.

Russia and Ukraine accused each other of shelling Enerhodar, the city where the plant is situated. The Ukrainians also charged that the Kremlin’s forces fired on a town across the Dnieper River from the power station.

Moon over Sedro-Woolley

UN agency calls for safety zone around Ukraine nuclear plant

BY RACQUEL MUZYCA

LAURA UNGAR

The weather has been posing a threat to ranchers trying to set aside enough hay for their cattle to eat this winter.

Terry Sapp, who owns Hohin Bond Farms out of Sedro-Woolley with his wife Jane Eagleston, grows grass on the farm to feed his 150 cattle. He usually can cut the grass through September or early October and let hay for his cattle to eat during the winter.

This year usually gets three cuttings a summer, but last year and this year the farmyard saw wet conditions to get only two cuttings.

June was so wet that Sapp was reluctant to let his cattle out to graze and he left the last start to the growing season did not bode well.

This year was somewhat different. Sapp said he cut the last of the excess hay saved up from last winter. Going into this summer with zero winter forage saved for him and the last start to the growing season did not bode well.

“Just was a somewhat different two different ways,” Sapp said.

Cindy Kleinhuizen of Double O Ranch in Concrete is in the same boat.

“We just barely made it through the winter. We didn’t have any extra,” Kleinhuizen said.

Sapp said the current summer was pushed back by the wet spring and that the crop ended up getting too wet. Thankfully bale cattle, something that’s been an absolute specific diet, can handle the dry hay. But the wet weather is not a plus.

The weather being hot and dry has made growing corn, alfalfa and grass bring its own challenges.

Grass grows poorly when the weather is hot in August, Sapp said. The hot weather led the grass to go dormant early, causing the fall fail-off of the season to come early.

With a late start and an early end to the growing season, Sapp predicts he will probably more likely be short on forage for this winter.

By RACQUEL MUZYCA

As the coronavirus scare that’s already lasted longer than the 1918 flu pandemic will linger far into the future.

But scientists say no. They predict the scourge that’s already lasted longer than the 1918 flu pandemic will linger far into the future.

One reason it’s lasted this long? It’s gotten better and better at getting around immunity from vaccination and past infections. On top of that, new variants are shifting, with the latest omicron variant gaining traction in the West last year. In fall and winter. In the most pessimistic scenarios, a new variant and late boosters — they projected 7,000 to 8,000 extra deaths and 181,000 deaths during that period. In the most optimistic scenarios, a new variant and early boosters — they projected 250 to 3,000 additional deaths and 181,000 deaths during that period.

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Still, living with COVID “should not necessarily be a scary or bad concept,” since people are getting better at fighting it, Jha said during a recent question-and-answer session with U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. “Obviously if we take our foot off the gas — if we stop updating our vaccines, we stop getting new treatments — then we will dip back down,” Jha said.

Experts say COVID will keep causing serious illness in some people. The COVID-19 Scenario Modeling Hub made some pandemic projections spanning August 2022 to May 2023, assuming the new twister boosters adding protection for the newest omicron variants would be available and a booster campaign would take place in fall and winter. In the most pessimistic scenario, a new variant and late boosters — they projected 7,000 to 8,000 extra deaths and 181,000 deaths during that period. In the most optimistic scenarios, a new variant and early boosters — they projected 250 to 3,000 additional deaths and 181,000 deaths during that period.

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