

The Columbus Dispatch

Headline exaggerated tuna risk

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There's no question that the Reuters article "Fukushima affects tuna caught in U.S." in the Wednesday *Dispatch* had an eye-catching headline. But it wasn't until the second paragraph that it was clear *The Dispatch* had fallen prey to the unfortunate practice embodied in the saying, "if it bleeds it leads."

But there's no blood here. In fact, there's really no "here" here.

Despite the fear-evoking headline, the article went on to report that "the levels are so small you would have to consume more than 700,000 pounds of the fish with the highest radioactive level to match the amount of radiation the average person is annually exposed to in everyday life."

Perhaps a more accurate headline would have been "Fukushima study finds West Coast fish 100% safe." Or perhaps *The Dispatch* believed the original headline would stand as a public service to the occasional reader who does in fact consume 700,000 pounds of tuna.

Or maybe it was just a blatant and overt violation of the Society of Professional Journalist's Code of Ethics:

"Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context."

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