

# Japan: Tepco pair caught radiation overdose

250 millisievert yearly threshold almost topped

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Tokyo Electric Power Co. said Saturday one of its employees was exposed to radiation close to the legal yearly limit of 250 millisieverts at the crisis-hit Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant and another worker's exposure was just under that threshold.

The two are the workers who were hospitalized for possible radiation burns to their feet March 24 after standing in water that contained radioactive materials 10,000 times the normal level while laying a cable underground at the plant, which was crippled by the March 11 mega-quake and tsunami.

Tepco said it found that the amount of internal and external radiation exposures of the employee with the highest exposure had reached 240.8 millisieverts.

Initially, Tepco said the worker was externally exposed to 180.07 millisieverts. But it later learned the victim was exposed to a high dose in a different building at the plant. The other worker received 226.6 millisieverts.

Under law, nuclear workers cannot be exposed to more than 250 millisieverts per year in an emergency situation. To cope with the Fukushima crisis, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry raised the legal limit of radiation that each worker could be exposed to in such a situation from 100 millisieverts on March 15.

Tepco said the latest revelation came after it checked its 21 workers whose external radiation exposure exceeded 100 millisieverts as of the end of March.

The one exposed to 240.8 millisieverts was externally exposed to 201.8 millisieverts of radiation and 39 millisieverts internally. Eight of the workers were exposed to a total of 150-200 millisieverts, while 11 were exposed to 100-150 millisieverts.

On Wednesday, the utility said one of its female employees at the No. 1 plant was exposed to radiation doses far above the legal limit for female workers. She was exposed to 17.55 millisieverts of radiation by March 23, against the legal limit of 5 millisieverts over a three-month period. Law requires that workers not be exposed to more than 100 millisieverts over five years and more than 50 millisieverts in one year, but the limit for female workers is 5 millisieverts in a three-month period, considering chances of pregnancy.

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