

# **Japan Two Years After : Radiation dose management for workers engaged in decontamination work near Fukushima Nuclear Plant has gone unchecked**

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## **Fukushima decontamination workers' exposure doses go unchecked**

Radiation dose management for workers engaged in decontamination work near the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant has gone unchecked, it has been revealed, raising questions about the government's control of businesses supplying workers for the hazardous work.

The Radiation Effects Association (REA), a public interest corporation keeping track of individual radiation workers' exposure data, has not received any data on workers carrying out government-led decontamination work near the Fukushima plant, despite an agreement last year between the REA and the Ministry of the Environment that the workers' employers send the data to the association. The failure apparently came because the ministry's instructions to those employers were insufficient.

Under the Industrial Safety and Health Law, the employers of decontamination workers are obliged to keep track of the workers' exposure doses. However, there is no framework for such data to be collected and managed in an integrated manner. If a worker was engaged in decontamination work under multiple employers, that worker's exposure doses cannot be aggregated, allowing the possibility of the total dose topping the legal limit of 50 millisieverts a year or 100 millisieverts over five years.

In the case of nuclear plant workers, radiation doses of individual workers are managed under the industry's voluntary rules, called the "exposure doses registry management system." Under the system, the REA's center for registering workers' radiation doses produces and manages a database on those doses in a uniform manner. Employers of nuclear plant workers are supposed to record individual workers' exposure doses in radiation control handbooks, and the data is then sent to the REA's registration center by power companies.

In May last year, the Environment Ministry produced common contract forms to be used with general contractors and other companies that receive decontamination work orders. The forms clearly state that, as much as possible, contractors must have their workers obtain radiation control handbooks. The REA requested the ministry have contractors send their workers' exposure data to

the REA's center on occasions such as when the workers leave their jobs, which the ministry agreed to. However, no such data has been received by the center to date.

An official with the ministry's decontamination work team defended its position, saying that the data transmission is left up to contractors and the REA, and that the ministry hasn't given detailed instructions to contractors. The REA, on the other hand, insisted that for uniform dose management, radiation control handbooks and dose data transmission are inseparable, adding that it has requested the ministry give detailed instructions to contractors.

Out of a total of 25 government-led decontamination projects in 10 municipalities in Fukushima Prefecture initiated in December 2011, 18 have thus far been completed. In three-month model decontamination projects in the prefectural town of Okuma in 2011 and 2012, at least one worker was exposed to 11.6 millisieverts of radiation — nearly one-fourth of the annual legal limit.

"The government needs to accurately grasp radiation doses workers are exposed to during decontamination work. Otherwise, workers will suffer disadvantages when they apply for workers' accident compensation. If the current framework isn't working, the government should establish a new system," said Kazumitsu Nawata, professor at the University of Tokyo graduate school, who is specialized in the situation of radiation workers.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, March 4, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130304p2a00m0na015000c.html>

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## **Collective exposure dose still remains high at Fukushima Daiichi**

The annualized radiation exposure of workers at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear complex since last March was four times higher than before the triple meltdowns occurred, figures provided by Tokyo Electric Power Co. showed Saturday.

The second such calculation since the power station experienced three catastrophic core meltdowns in March 2011 underscored the difficulties in pursuing long-term decommissioning work and lowering the irradiation of workers at a time when levels of radiation remain sky-high at the crippled facility.

Tepco's report estimated the total dose workers received from March 2012 to January in "man-sievert" units.

The collective exposure came to 60.1 man-sieverts, or an annualized 65.6 man-sieverts – around 4.4 times higher than the 14.9 man-sieverts recorded at the Fukushima No. 1 power station in fiscal 2009, according to the utility's calculations.

Compared with the 246.9 man-sieverts logged during the first year of the nuclear crisis from March 2011, the latest figure fell to around a quarter. However, it remained high compared with the average 46.3 man-sieverts logged in fiscal 2011 at other atomic power plants operated by Tepco.

In the period between April 2012 and January, meanwhile, the average exposure of approximately 12,100 workers surveyed at the Fukushima No. 1 plant stood at 4.6 millisieverts, with the highest dose reaching 46.59 millisieverts.

The maximum radiation dose for nuclear workers is set at 50 millisieverts per year, and 100 millisieverts over five years. The government raised the annual limit to 250 millisieverts after the Fukushima No. 1 meltdowns, but lowered it to 50 millisieverts that December.

**Kyodo News**, March 3, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/03/national/collective-exposure-dose-still-remains-high-at-fukushima-daiichi/#.UTVCqDfA55s>

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## **Outlook Not Good for Waste Storage after Meltdown**

Fukushima, March 3 (Jiji Press)—The outlook still remains bad for proposed interim radioactive waste storage facilities though nearly two years have passed since the world's unprecedented triple meltdown occurred at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in northeastern Japan.

It is unclear whether the government can win local support for its plan to establish interim facilities in the three Fukushima Prefecture towns of Futaba, Okuma and Naraha to store waste contaminated with radioactive materials from the stricken plant. The plant straddles Futaba and Okuma, while Naraha sits close to Okuma.

Without such facilities, decontamination of areas around the nuclear plant is unlikely to progress as decontamination work gives rise to more such waste, mainly soil. Evacuees from contaminated areas cannot return home until decontamination work ends.

Of the 11 municipalities around the nuclear plant, including the two hosts, only four—Tamura, Naraha, Kawauchi and Iitate—have seen state-backed decontamination work start.

The Environment Ministry hopes to finish decontamination by the end of March 2014. The key is interim storage, because small makeshift storage that has been established in many areas for decontamination work is not good for storing highly toxic waste for a long time.

**Jiji Press**, March 3, 2013

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2013022800873>

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