

Japan, 2 years after Fukushima disaster: Radiation exposure data for over 20,000 nuclear cleanup workers still not submitted

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Tokyo Electric Power Co. has not yet submitted radiation exposure records for over 20,000 workers who helped in the cleanup at its disaster-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant to the association charged with managing the data, it has emerged.

Nuclear power plant contractors and subcontractors record exposure data in workers' radiation handbooks, and power companies digitalize it and send it to the Radiation Effects Association's central registration center for workers exposed to radiation, which manages the information. However, officials say there are no laws on reporting data; rather, companies in the industry send it under a self-imposed rule.

Power companies and employers must measure workers' radiation exposure and make sure it doesn't exceed 50 millisieverts in a single year or 100 millisieverts over five years. When workers take on new employment at a nuclear power plant, officials check their handbooks for radiation exposure data, comparing it with data held by the Radiation Effects Association's central registration center. The center's information is also used when reissuing lost handbooks. The association says it receives between about 70,000 and 100,000 data requests from power companies each year.

Around May or June each year, utilities hand the association radiation exposure records for the preceding fiscal year. Around June 2011, TEPCO told the association that it would be late in submitting records for fiscal 2010, which overlapped with the onset of the nuclear disaster.

In July 2012, TEPCO submitted data recorded before the start of the nuclear disaster, but it has still not handed over data for over 20,000 workers since then.

"We managed the records on paper, and it has taken a long time to convert them to digital data," a TEPCO representative said when questioned over the delay.

Mainichi Shimbun, February 28, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130228p2a00m0na013000c.html>

High radiation in fish caught off No. 1 plant

A greenling caught in the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant's small harbor contained 510,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram, 5,100 times above the state-set safety limit, Tokyo Electric Power Co. said.

If someone were to eat 1 kg of fish with this level, they would be exposed to about 7.7 millisieverts of internal radiation. Also caught during efforts by Tepco to rid the harbor of all fish was a spotbelly rockfish containing 277,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram.

At the mouth of the harbor, where the ocean is about 10 meters deep, Tepco has set up a 2-meter-high net at the seafloor to prevent bottom fish from swimming out. The harbor seabed has been seriously contaminated with radioactive substances.

"If we make the net higher, vessels won't be able to go through," said a Tepco official, adding the utility will continue to get rid of fish in the harbor.

The highest level of radioactive cesium found in fish had been 254,000 becquerels per kilogram, also in a spotbelly rockfish caught in the harbor.

Kyodo News, March 2, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2013/03/02/environment/high-radiation-in-fish-caught-off-no-1-plant/#.UTFf6jfA55s>

Radiation levels in 80-km zone around Fukushima plant down 40 percent: gov't

Radiation levels in an 80-kilometer radius around the disaster-stricken Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant are down 40 percent, possibly due to the effects of rainfall and decontamination work, according to a government ministry.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) on March 1 released a radiation map taken of the area showing airborne radiation one meter from ground level, measured from a helicopter on Nov. 16 last year. Compared to measurements taken around a year earlier on Nov. 5, 2011, the measurements were on average around 40 percent down.

During the time between the measurements, radioactive cesium would have naturally lessened by around 21 percent. It was the sixth radiation measurement of the area from a helicopter since the nuclear disaster. Measurements were also taken from air for areas in eight prefectures outside the 80-kilometer zone, where earlier surveys found higher radiation levels, on Dec. 28. Most of those measurements were below one microsievert per hour.

The radiation map can be seen on MEXT's homepage.

Mainichi Shimbun, March 2, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130302p2a00m0na008000c.html>
