

## **Fukushima residents' plight**

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### **Fukushima residents' urine now radioactive**

More than 3 millisieverts of radiation has been measured in the urine of 15 Fukushima residents of the village of Iitate and the town of Kawamata, confirming internal radiation exposure, it was learned Sunday.

Both are about 30 to 40 km from the Fukushima No. 1 power plant, which has been releasing radioactive material into the environment since the week of March 11, when the quake and tsunami caused core meltdowns.

"This won't be a problem if they don't eat vegetables or other products that are contaminated," said Nanao Kamada, professor emeritus of radiation biology at Hiroshima University. "But it will be difficult for people to continue living in these areas."

Kamada teamed up with doctors including Osamu Saito of Watari Hospital in the city of Fukushima to conduct two rounds of tests on each resident in early and late May, taking urine samples from 15 people between 4 and 77.

Radioactive cesium was found both times in each resident.

Radioactive iodine was logged as high as 3.2 millisieverts in six people in the first survey, but none was found in the second survey.

The data indicate accumulated external exposure was between 4.9 and 13.5 millisieverts, putting the grand total between 4.9 to 14.2 millisieverts over about two months, they said.

"The figures did not exceed the maximum of 20 millisieverts a year, but we want residents to use these results to make decisions (to move)," said Kamada.

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<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110627a2.html>

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### **Survey shows disappointment, anger among Fukushima evacuees**

Disappointment toward Tokyo Electric Power Co. for its failure to guard the safety of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant and anger at the central government's inept handling of the accident.

Those are the two major themes that emerge from the results of an interview survey of 407 evacuees from the Fukushima nuclear accident.

About 90,000 Fukushima residents have evacuated because of the nuclear accident, with about a third of that number moving outside of the prefecture entirely.

The interviews were conducted with evacuees now scattered around the nation.

While TEPCO may have provided many Fukushima residents with jobs, the nuclear accident has turned many evacuees against nuclear energy.

The survey was performed jointly by The Asahi Shimbun and a research team led by Akira Imai, a professor at Fukushima University specializing in local government policy.

When asked their opinion on the use of nuclear energy, 70 percent of respondents said they were opposed while 26 percent said they were in favor of nuclear energy.

While the survey methods and sample sizes are different, those results are much more anti-nuclear than a nationwide poll conducted by The Asahi Shimbun in June in which 37 percent favored the use of nuclear energy and 42 percent opposed it.

Despite the accident and uncertainty concerning how long the evacuation will continue, a large majority of respondents said they wanted to eventually return to the communities they were forced to leave.

A total of 79 percent said they either wanted to return or wanted to return if at all possible.

Only 12 percent said they either did not want to return or only wanted to return somewhat.

Having young children was an obvious reason for not wanting to return to Fukushima.

A 37-year-old woman left her home in Minami-Soma with her husband and one-year-old son even before the region was designated as a potential emergency evacuation zone.

Whenever her son has health problems because of the unaccustomed evacuation life, the woman blames herself for giving birth at such a difficult time.

Her husband wants to return to their home which is close to where he works, but the woman has doubts whenever she thinks about her son.

A 26-year-old woman evacuated to Yamagata city with her five-year-old son. Although she was told by her company in Minami-Soma that she would be let go if she failed to return by the end of July, she has no intention of returning and is looking for work in Yamagata.

"No matter how much they say it is safe, there is no way we can believe them ever again," the woman said.

Even those respondents who said they wanted to return to their communities also had doubts when pressed further in the interviews.

One respondent admitted that fears of radiation would make a return home impossible. Another said the family farm was probably useless due to the radiation.

A 53-year-old man who worked for a subcontractor to TEPCO said, "Because I used to work at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, I understand the dangers of radiation. I cannot return to my home."

The deep disappointment felt by many of the respondents is due to the fact that many believed TEPCO and other experts who repeatedly said Japan's nuclear power plants were safe and that no accident would ever occur.

Respondents were asked their views about nuclear power plants before the accident. A total of 66 percent of the respondents said they thought the plants were either safe or somewhat safe.

A total of 75 percent of respondents also said the nuclear power plants had a positive effect on the local economy.

Feeling betrayed, respondents were quick to lash out at TEPCO and the central government.

When asked if the nuclear accident at the Fukushima plant could have been prevented, 46 percent said "yes," while only 28 percent said "no."

An even higher percentage—52 percent—of respondents who had at one time worked in nuclear-plant-related jobs said the accident could have been prevented.

Among those latter respondents, one said "The emergency power sources should have been installed on higher ground." Another respondent said, "One cause of the accident was continuing to use reactors that had become outdated."

When asked about the future of nuclear energy in Japan, only a combined 30 percent said the number of nuclear plants should be either increased or maintained at current levels. Thirty-eight percent said the number should be decreased while 32 percent said the nuclear plants should be eliminated altogether.

Anger at the central government was due in major part to the confusion over evacuation instructions in the immediate aftermath of the accident.

A number of evacuees said they were given conflicting or incomplete instructions that made it difficult to understand where they should flee to.

Respondents also felt distrust toward the central government for calling on residents to respond in a calm manner while refusing to release forecasts of how radioactive materials might disperse.

A 72-year-old woman said, "Information that radioactive materials had spewed from the plant was only transmitted later. If I had known about it earlier, I would have evacuated much farther away."

A woman in her 60s from Namie said, "Not being informed about radiation, I was told to go to a location that had dangerously high levels of radiation."

As a result of such experiences, a total of 80 percent of respondents said the government's response was either totally inappropriate or somewhat inappropriate.

Only 15 percent of respondents said the response was either very appropriate or somewhat appropriate.

The confused response by the central government meant many residents were forced to move from one evacuation center to another.

Respondents were asked the number of evacuation centers they had moved to.

The most popular response, with 99 respondents, was three locations.

About 40 percent of respondents had moved to four or more locations, with one individual having moved to 12 different evacuation centers.

Evacuation has also broken up families that used to live together.

A 63-year-old woman from Okuma now lives in a hotel in Aizuwakamatsu with her husband, the sixth evacuation center for her. Before the accident, the couple's son and his family lived together in the same home.

However, the son's family has evacuated to Kanagawa Prefecture due to concerns about the effects of radiation on the children.

Thirty-four percent of respondents said their families were living apart due to the evacuation.

With life in evacuation centers now exceeding three months, close to half of the respondents said their health had worsened as a result.

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<http://www.asahi.com/english/TKY201106240204.html>

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