

# Japan : Anger boils over in Fukushima Pref. after news of new radioactive water leak

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« It's just one problem after another. »

That's what one angry Fukushima Prefecture resident had to say about Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO)'s latest accident, a leak of some 300 metric tons of toxic water from a storage tank on the grounds of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

The resident isn't the only one frustrated with TEPCO and the utility's apparent inability to catch up with all the problems besetting the nuclear station. Local anger has been on high boil since the discovery earlier this year that ground water badly tainted with radioactive substances was leaking into the Pacific Ocean, delaying the coastal fishery's plans to begin test catches for the first time since the March 2011 meltdowns.

« We want these problems dealt with for what they are, a national emergency, » said Fukushima Gov. Yuhei Sato.

TEPCO Managing Director Tsunemasa Niitsuma was at an information session in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture — close to the stricken No. 1 plant — on Aug. 20 to apologize to the local fishing cooperative for the latest leak. At the top of the agenda for the session was countermeasures TEPCO is taking to stop contaminated groundwater from seeping into the sea. The recently discovered storage tank leak, however, soon horned its way into proceedings.

The some 150 fishing cooperative members on-hand poured criticism onto Niitsuma, including one attendee who said, « All your countermeasures look like nothing but makeshift expedients. »

Test catches off the coast of Fukushima Prefecture were scheduled to begin in September this year, but have been postponed indefinitely due to the radioactive groundwater leaks.

Fukushima Prefectural Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations Chairman Tetsu Nozaki summed up the general distrust of TEPCO when he wondered if the utility « can really deal with the crisis on its own. This problem ought to be dealt with as a national problem. »

After news of the leaking tank broke, Fukushima Prefecture formally demanded that TEPCO investigate the cause of the latest accident and implement countermeasures. The prefecture also held an emergency meeting of department heads concerned with the crisis to deliberate a response.

« We've repeatedly demanded that TEPCO improve its safety management, and this latest incident is very frustrating, » Gov. Saito commented.

## **Fukushima residents to sue gov't for inaction on nuke disaster support law**

A group of residents from Fukushima Prefecture is poised to sue the government for its « illegal » failure to implement provisions of a law to support nuclear disaster victims more than a year after its enactment.

The some 20 plaintiffs — residents in Fukushima Prefecture and those who have voluntarily evacuated outside the prefecture — are filing the suit with the Tokyo District Court, demanding the central government draw up a basic policy under the Act on the Protection and Support for the Children and other Victims of TEPCO Disaster, which was enacted in June 2012.

The Reconstruction Agency, which administers the measures set out in the law, has yet to create radiation dose standards that are to be used to set which areas are eligible for support. The government's inaction has led to a delay in providing support to residents and voluntary evacuees affected by the nuclear catastrophe.

The plaintiffs include residents in the Fukushima Prefecture cities of Fukushima and Koriyama, which are outside the designated evacuation zones where annual radiation doses top 20 millisieverts, as well as those who voluntarily evacuated outside the prefecture. The group also includes residents in Nasushiobara, Tochigi Prefecture, and Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, where radiation doses are relatively high.

An appendix to the disaster support law stipulates that areas to be covered by support measures should be reviewed every year based on radiation dose surveys. The plaintiffs, therefore, call it « illegal » that a basic policy hasn't been worked out more than a year since the enactment of the law, whose appendix presupposes that a basic policy is put together within a year of enactment.

The plaintiffs also maintain that the annual radiation dose limit for the general public should be 1 millisievert, and that areas where radiation levels exceed that limit should be subject to support measures. The plaintiffs argue that they all should be covered by aid schemes based on radiation doses at the time the law was enacted in June last year.

However, because radiation dose standards have not yet been set, neither areas to be supported under the law nor a basic policy have been determined, leaving nuclear disaster victims' plight unaddressed, the plaintiffs say. They specifically criticize the government for failing to provide housing and employment assistance to plaintiffs who evacuated voluntarily, and to aid plaintiffs in areas where subsidized health checks may be available due to local radiation exposure.

Earlier this year, a senior Reconstruction Agency official in charge of supporting Fukushima nuclear disaster victims was criticized for repeatedly tweeting defamatory comments against an NGO, lawmakers and others involved in disaster recovery efforts.

On March 8, he tweeted, « One of the pending issues was resolved today. To be precise, the concerned parties agreed to leave the matter ambiguous, with no black and white decisions » —

apparently praising the government's postponing of consideration of radiation dose criteria and a basic policy under the law. In fact, the Reconstruction Agency hasn't even specified a target deadline for formulating the basic policy and dose criteria yet.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, August 20, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130820p2a00m0na013000c.html>

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### **Fukushima nuclear plant worker widow sues TEPCO, other firms**

SHIZUOKA — A widow of a former worker at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant has sued four companies including plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) over his death, it's been learned.

Nobukatsu Osumi's 55-year-old bereaved wife filed a suit to the Shizuoka District Court on Aug. 20, demanding TEPCO, her late husband's prime contractor Toshiba Corp., as well as two subcontractors, pay a total of 30.8 million yen in compensation. The plaintiff claims the husband's death was due to a lack of a medical care system at the site and a harsh working environment.

Among six workers who died during restoration work at the nuclear plant, this is the first suit filed by a bereaved family.

According to the suit, Osumi, 60 at the time of his death, was dispatched to the plant in May 2011 and worked as a plumber at a waste treatment facility. He died of a heart attack on the second day of his job. The cause of his death was recognized as an industrial accident in 2012.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, August 21, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130821p2a00m0na004000c.html>

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### **Fukushima fishermen delay resuming business due to toxic water leak**

FUKUSHIMA (Kyodo) — A fisheries cooperative in Iwaki city, Fukushima Prefecture that has been voluntarily suspending business since the March 2011 disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, decided Wednesday to postpone a trial operation that had been set for Sept. 5.

The cooperative has yet to set a new date. Masakazu Yabuki, head of the cooperative, told reporters after a meeting that, « We believe that (the decision to postpone the operation) is logical as we hear about issues over the leakage into the ocean of contaminated water day in, day out. We intend to conduct the trial operation if the situation settles down. »

The cooperative originally planned to start the test operation in waters off the city from Sept. 5, aiming to ship their goods after checking them for radioactive materials to confirm their safety.

The majority of meeting participants said that starting the operation on Sept. 5 would be difficult after it came to light in July that radioactive water has been spilling into the Pacific Ocean from the nuclear power plant.

Fisheries operations have been voluntarily suspended in the prefecture facing the Pacific following the 2011 accident. In June last year, the Soma Futaba fisheries cooperative started a test operation off the coast of Soma city, north of the crippled plant. Iwaki City is located south of the plant.

**Kyodo News**, August 22, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130822p2g00m0dm042000c.html>

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