

Fukushima decontamination faces severe labor shortages

FUKUSHIMA (Jiji Press)--Fukushima Prefecture is facing severe labor shortages for decontamination work following the 2011 nuclear crisis.

The shortage stems from radiation fears and low pay. According to the labor ministry's Fukushima Labor Bureau, only about 10 percent of about 1,800 decontamination positions have been filled.

"Decontamination work cannot continue," said a local contractor. Delays in decontamination work are hampering efforts to rebuild the prefecture devastated by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

"Many people expect high wages for the work, because of radiation fears," said Shunichi Hirotani, an official at the Hello Work public job placement center for the northern part of the prefecture.

"In reality, the wages are about the same as those for regular construction work," Hirotani said.

At the job placement center, the lowest monthly wages offered for decontamination work in November averaged 190,000 yen, about 20,000 yen higher than the figure for the general construction industry in the area.

The highest wages for decontamination work averaged 260,000 yen, compared with 250,000 yen for the industry as a whole.

The basic labor cost for decontamination work is the same as that for general civil engineering work, said Shinji Kato, president of Sato Kogyo Ltd., a construction company based in Fukushima.

(Jan. 30, 2013)

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