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Group: Ministry may have manipulated Fukushima radiation readings

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THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Citizens and scientists have raised concerns that the science ministry manipulated its measurement of radiation levels in Fukushima Prefecture to show figures lower than they really were.

The Association for Citizens and Scientists Concerned About Internal Radiation Exposures said on Oct. 5 that its survey this year of airborne dose levels found an average 10-30 percent higher than the ministry's numbers, and in certain areas, the discrepancy was even greater.

The group measured radiation levels at about 100 monitoring posts set up by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology throughout the prefecture, which is home to the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. It then measured radiation levels about 10 meters away from each of the posts.

The group's readings at those locations averaged 40-50 percent higher than the figures reported by the ministry at the posts themselves.

"We are afraid that the ministry might have thoroughly decontaminated areas immediately adjacent to the monitoring posts or tinkered with numbers in an attempt to get lower readings," Katsuma Yagasaki, professor emeritus of physics at the University of Ryukyus, told a news conference in Tokyo.

But an official with the ministry's nuclear disaster response section denied the accusations.

"We have never intended to show radiation lower than actual levels," the official said.

The official added that the Fukushima prefectural government's website releases information on which areas next to monitoring posts are decontaminated.

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