

High radiation exposure level in Fukushima resident puzzles experts

November 19, 2012

2

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

FUKUSHIMA--A Fukushima resident living well outside the no-entry zone set up after last year's nuclear disaster was exposed to an unusually high level of radiation in the first four months after the crisis, prefectural officials said.

The resident in the northern part of Fukushima Prefecture, who spent a lot of time outdoors, had a reading of 11 millisieverts, compared with the previous maximum of 7 millisieverts for residents of areas far from the crippled nuclear plant, which were considered relatively free of risk.

The resident was among 234,000 people across the prefecture who had undergone checks for external radiation exposure as of the end of October. The dose estimates are based on the records of their whereabouts during the first four months following the disaster.

The case was reported by prefectural authorities Nov. 18 to a committee doing a survey on radiation healthcare for residents.

Maximum radiation exposure levels of 25 millisieverts have been found in only a few cases among residents of Iitate and other municipalities near the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Aside from nuclear plant and other workers brought in to deal with the March 2011 crisis, about 120 people have been found with estimated doses of 10 millisieverts or more.

The resident with the 11-millisievert reading is an exceptional case, given the fact that the person lived far from the plant. All the other individuals with high readings were residents of Iitate or Namie.

In a separate case, a woman, who was a teenager at the time of the accident, developed thyroid problems and is undergoing a thorough health checkup. Officials were unable to say if her condition is directly related to the nuclear crisis.

That finding is part of the Fukushima government's report on Nov. 18 on the results of thyroid gland tests for children aged 18 years or under at the time of the disaster. Results were available for about 114,000 children as of Nov. 1.

Nobody has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer since September. A child was diagnosed with thyroid cancer earlier.

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN