
Mountains of debris waiting to be disposed of

Less than 30 percent of debris generated by the 2011 tsunami disaster in the 3 hardest hit prefectures has been disposed.

The Environment Ministry estimates the total amount of debris and tsunami sediment to be disposed in the 3 prefectures is about 27.5 million tons. The ministry has set the end of March of next year as a target for completing disposal.

But as of the end of last November, the amount dealt with was only 24 percent in Iwate Prefecture, 31 percent in Miyagi and 12 percent in Fukushima.

The ministry attributes the delay to difficulties in the handling of non-combustible waste and in building incinerators. Debris contaminated by radioactive substances is also hampering the work, especially in areas near the troubled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. The central government has faced opposition from municipalities when it has tried to set up temporary storage facilities or incinerators.

The Environment Ministry says it hopes to speed up the disposal as the debris is hindering the reconstruction of communities and putting a psychological burden on local residents.

Jan. 3, 2013 - Updated 19:03 UTC (04:03 JST)