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## TEPCO admits 4th worker exposed to radiation in early days of disaster

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THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A full one year and eight months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. has acknowledged that four workers, not three as it had maintained, were exposed to varying levels of radiation soon after the crisis unfolded.

It said the men were working in the basement of the turbine building for the No. 3 reactor at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

TEPCO and its business partner Kandenko Co. had previously said that only three workers waded through highly contaminated water on March 24, 2011.

That story held up until last month. A different worker revealed during a Nov. 1 news conference that he had refused to go to the basement but someone else went there.

TEPCO and Kandenko confirmed the veracity of the man's statement on Nov. 2.

It emerged that a team of six workers was dispatched to the turbine building to lay cables as part of emergency procedures following explosions and reactor meltdowns triggered by the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11 and the massive tsunami it spawned.

Of the six, two were Kandenko employees. One was an employee of a first-tier subcontractor. The other three worked for a second-tier subcontractor.

The two Kandenko employees and the man working for a first-tier subcontractor ventured to the basement and went about their tasks while ignoring dosimeters clicking ever faster due to the high radiation levels.

The three were exposed to about 180 millisieverts of radiation--a dangerously high level--that required immediate medical treatment.

According to the explanation given by TEPCO and Kandenko on Nov. 2, the three employees of the second-tier subcontractor were ordered by Kandenko to go to the basement just as the cable work was finishing.

One of the three, who was wearing protective rubber footwear, spent five to 10 minutes there and was exposed to 56 millisieverts of radiation, not a high enough level to cause health problems, TEPCO said.

When pressed about the discrepancy, TEPCO said there was no deliberate attempt to cover up the facts.

"It was our understanding that the worker in question was carrying out a different task from other three who were in the basement for a long time. There was no deliberate attempt to conceal this fact (that a fourth worker was exposed as a result of wading through

contaminated water).”

A Kandenko official added: "Nobody forced the worker to go to the basement against his will. We filed a report with the government that said, in addition to the three men, another worker went to the basement."

It turns out that was not the end of the matter.

While the three workers toiled away in the basement, a separate team measured high radiation of 400 millisieverts per hour near the water surface there and immediately tried to flee the area. The members of that team told the Kandenko workers to evacuate immediately.

It was before this chaotic rush that the fourth worker ventured to the basement, according to TEPCO and Kandenko.

However, a worker who gave a news conference on Nov. 1 offered a different version of events.

"After the other team called on the (Kandenko-led) team to flee, the fourth worker was ordered down to the basement," he said.

However, the man, fearful of entering an area with high radiation levels, did not follow the instruction.

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