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## TEPCO paid membership fee to nuclear lobby group after Fukushima disaster

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### THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Following the nation's worst nuclear accident in 2011 and while requesting governmental assistance to help it stay afloat, Tokyo Electric Power Co. paid 1.8 billion yen (\$189 million) to maintain its membership in a nuclear power lobbying group, The Asahi Shimbun has learned.

The payment to the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan came at a time the utility was seeking financial support from the government, while announcing a streamlining plan to come up with the funds to contain the nuclear crisis and compensate victims and evacuees.

The utility's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant was stricken by three reactor meltdowns in March 2011 following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

TEPCO's annual membership fee for fiscal 2011, which began in April 2011, was included in electricity rates as operating costs, which have been approved before the 2011 accident.

"We paid 1.8 billion yen as a membership fee for fiscal 2011 as we believe the federation's activities have a great significance," a TEPCO official said. "We plan to pay the membership fee from funds in the future that are not associated with electricity rates. And we are not in a position to tell how the fee was spent."

The federation, comprising 10 regional utilities, is the nuclear industry's lobbying group. Its stated mission is to educate and inform the public about nuclear energy and to formulate the industry's position statement, in addition to conducting various research concerning nuclear power.

It is a private association and is not obligated to release its budget, financial dealings, size of its staff and details of its operations.

This is the first time the amount of a member company's annual membership fee has come to light. An official with the federation declined to comment and to disclose details concerning its revenues and spending as well as individual operations, citing the privacy of its member companies and business partners.

In fiscal 2011, TEPCO asked the government to provide financial assistance to help it contain the nuclear crisis and to pay compensate victims and evacuees, and announced a series of cost-cutting measures, including a reduction in remuneration of its board members and sale of some properties.

Two months after the crisis began, the government approved a plan to assist the utility with the injection of public funds.

A government panel of experts, which began to look into the utility's management in June, concluded in a report in October that the

two months later.

(This article was written by Satoshi Otani and Yo Noguchi.)

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