Fukushima residents irked by outage at crippled atomic plant

The Associated Press

FUKUSHIMA, Japan, March 19 (Kyodo) — Residents of Fukushima Prefecture expressed anxiety about an outage that hit the disaster-damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on Monday.

Masahide Matsumoto, mayor of Katsurao village where all of its residents have been forced to evacuate after the March 2011 nuclear disaster, said that the incident came at a sensitive time as evacuation zones are scheduled to be reclassified Friday and some residents are allowed to make day trips to their homes.

"We will be in trouble unless Tokyo Electric Power Co. properly investigates the cause (of the outage) and restores power," Matsumoto said, citing concerns for increased worries among villagers.

A 27-year-old housewife in Fukushima City said, "I am very worried because I have a baby. I want the information to be disclosed as quickly as possible because it will be difficult to evacuate promptly if (an emergency occurs) at night." The incident was made public by the Nuclear Regulation Authority around three hours after it took place just before 7 p.m.

A 49-year-old office employee in the city, Takashi Haga, seemed surprised at the latest incident, saying, "It revived the memory of the nuclear accident two years ago. I thought it was under control."

At the Fukushima prefectural government office, four staff members at a nuclear safety division received information by fax or phone from TEPCO and communicated with officials at local municipalities. The staffers appeared relatively calm, with one of them saying, "We want TEPCO to pin down the cause and respond to the situation."

Makoto Yanagida, a representative of the antinuclear civic group No Nukes Plaza Tokyo known as Tanpoposha in Japanese, said, "It's just nonsense that a power company is hit by a blackout. We need to be vigilant, though, to see if TEPCO is going to make public what really happened."

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