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## **Many Anxious Fukushima Residents Undergo Radiation Screening Tests**

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One-year-old Himari, center, held by her mother Tomomi Sato, left, undergoes a radiation screening test at the welfare office in Oyama, Fukushima Prefecture, on May 24, 2011. (Mainichi)OYAMA, Fukushima -- An increasing number of residents here, feeling insecure about their health and discrimination against them, have taken screening tests for radiation, with a few of them found to have been exposed to levels of radiation higher than the legal limit.

As of May 24, a total of 192,500 people, or one in 10 people in Fukushima Prefecture, had taken screening tests since March 13 when the Fukushima Prefectural Government started the program in the wake of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, which has been crippled by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

There have been no cases of people found to have been exposed to levels of radiation higher than the legal limit since March 29. Many of the Fukushima residents decided to take the tests to receive "official endorsement" because some lodging and medical facilities asked them to prove that they are not contaminated with radiation.

The prefectural government started the screening program free of charge on March 13, using survey meters -- portable radiation detection and measurement instruments. If radiation of 100,000 counts per minute (cpm) or higher is detected on a person, the whole body should be washed with water to get rid of the radiation. But since March 29 when the last person, or the 102nd person, went through the decontamination process, no one has had to be decontaminated for nearly two months.

On May 24 at the prefectural welfare office in Oyama, Fukushima Prefecture, Tomomi Sato, 32, underwent the test with her 1-year-old daughter, Himari. They measured less than 200 cpm of radiation each and received documents that said, "Nothing abnormal detected."

The welfare office says there have been no cases of detecting 1,000 cpm or more of radiation -- one hundredth of the legal limit -- at least since the beginning of May. "Because I was worried about my daughter's radiation exposure, we took the tests for the first time. I am relieved now, but I am still worried about the possible effects emerging 10 years or 20 years from now," Sato said. At all venues where screening is conducted, documents that clarify each individual is not contaminated with radiation are issued in an effort to deal with groundless rumors about radiation contamination.

In late March, there were cases of some evacuation shelters asking refugees to show certificates to prove they were not contaminated with radiation. In April, children from Fukushima were bullied after evacuating to a city outside of Fukushima. There were some cases of hotels refusing to accept people from Fukushima.

"We have started issuing official documents since mid-March because we received requests from many people who said they would need to show the screening documents when they try to do things like taking medical checkups at medical facilities outside Fukushima," said an official of the welfare office in Minamisoma.

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