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Bodies of 2 Missing Workers Found at Nuclear Plant

By **KEN BELSON** and **HIROKO TABUCHI**

TOKYO — The operator of the stricken Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station said Sunday that two workers at the plant who had been missing since the day the earthquake and tsunami hit [Japan](#) last month had been confirmed dead.

They are the first two workers at the plant and the first employees of the operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company, to have died in the aftermath of the March 11 quake, tsunami and subsequent nuclear crisis. Five employees of subsidiary companies have died at other Tokyo Electric facilities.

Tokyo Electric said the workers at the Daiichi plant were found in the basement of the turbine building connected to the plant's No. 4 reactor. The company found the workers on Wednesday, but did not release the details until their families had been notified.

The company said the workers, Kazuhiro Kokubo, 24, and Yoshiki Terashima, 21, died on March 11 around 4 p.m., after the tsunami hit the Daiichi plant. The company said the workers lost great amounts of blood and went into shock, and linked their deaths to the tsunami.

"It pains me that these two young workers were trying to protect the power plant while being hit by the earthquake and tsunami," Tokyo Electric's chairman, Tsunehisa Katsumata, said in a statement.

Of the other five deaths of power plant workers connected to the earthquake and tsunami, one man died when he was struck by a crane that had toppled at the Fukushima Daini nuclear plant, six miles from the Daiichi plant. Four other workers died at Tokyo Electric's Hitachinaka thermal power plant when they fell from the chimneys they were working on.

The confirmation of the deaths at the Daiichi plant came a day after Japanese safety officials announced that highly radioactive water was leaking directly into the sea from a damaged pit

near one of the plant's crippled reactors. The leak was the latest setback in the increasingly difficult bid to regain control of the plant.

Although higher than normal levels of radiation have been detected in the ocean water near the plant in recent days, this was the first time the source of any leaks was found.

On Sunday, Hidehiko Nishiyama, deputy director general of Japan's nuclear regulator, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, said there had been no progress in slowing the water rushing through the leak.

Because the government did not report the levels of radioactive materials in the waters near the plant on Saturday, it was difficult to judge how dangerous the levels of radiation were for fish or for humans who might come in contact with it. The government has already set up an evacuation zone for 19 miles around the plant, and fishing in the area has been suspended since the earthquake and tsunami.

Mr. Nishiyama said it was possible that the leak was behind the elevated radiation levels near the shore found in recent days. The government announced Saturday that higher than normal levels of radioactive materials were detected about 25 miles south of the plant, much farther than had previously been reported.

The leak, found at a maintenance pit near the plant's No. 2 reactor, is a fresh reminder of the dangerous side effects of the strategy to cool the plant's reactors and spent fuel storage pools by pumping hundreds of tons of water a day into them. While much of that water has evaporated, a significant portion has also turned into dangerous runoff.

The Japanese authorities have said they have little choice at the moment, since the normal cooling systems at the plant are inoperable and more radioactive material would be released if the reactors were allowed to melt down fully or if the rods caught fire.

"It is our hope that we can stop the emissions of radioactive materials at the latest in several months" at the power plants, said Goshi Hosono, a member of the ruling party who is an envoy between the government and Tokyo Electric.

The official death toll from the quake and tsunami surpassed 12,000 on Sunday, the National Police Agency said. More than 15,500 remain listed as missing.

Tokyo Electric has come under growing scrutiny for its handling of the nuclear crisis. In recent days, reports surfaced that the company, once the largest utility in the world, would be taken over by the government. Tokyo Electric reported that a "campaigner's sound truck,"

presumably sent to heckle the company, was blocked from entering the Daiichi plant on March 31.

Frequent protests are also being held at the company's headquarters in the Uchisaiwai-cho neighborhood of central Tokyo. On Sunday, several hundred anti-nuclear protesters assembled in front of Tokyo Electric's offices and then marched to the Kasumigaseki district to protest in front of the offices of Japan's nuclear regulators.

The protesters yelled slogans such as, "Tokyo Electric, get out of **nuclear energy**," and "Compensate the victims." Others called for the company and government to apologize over the crisis. Some carried placards that said, "Even if we don't have nuclear power, we'll still have electricity."

"The Japanese people don't protest usually, but this time, we have to show that we can call for change," said Masanobu Takeshi, 40, who attended with his wife and son. After watching the regular news briefings from Tokyo Electric, Mr. Takeshi said he began to question the credibility of officials.

Makoto Yanagida, 70, who has been protesting since March 12, said that only about 10 people showed up for the first demonstration. Sunday was the 10th protest, which drew more than 300 people, he said. Mr. Yanagida said he would continue protesting until nuclear plants were shut down.

Nearby, in the Ginza shopping district, life was slowly returning to normal on Sunday. For the first time since the earthquake struck, the main street was closed to traffic to create an outdoor shopping mall. Pedestrian traffic in the district has dropped by about 30 percent since March 11, according to police estimates, and that has hurt local businesses such as the Ginza Lion beer hall.

In the days after the earthquake, business all but collapsed at the restaurant, which holds more than 1,200 customers. The restaurant has faced a shortage of food and beer, in large part because a Sapporo brewery in Sendai, a coastal city hit hard by the tsunami, was knocked out. To conserve energy, it has turned off its neon signs and closes one hour earlier. Business has begun to recover but is still 20 percent lower than normal, according to the company.

"The situation is bad, but the worst is behind us," said Osamu Sumitani, 45, the deputy manager of the beer hall. "We now just need the nuclear problem to be solved."

Toshifumi Kimura, 68, a director at manufacturing company, agreed. He and his wife had heard that Ginza had become a ghost town and came to see it for themselves. Although people in Tokyo look anxious, even grim because of the ongoing nuclear crisis, “we should stop showing so much self-restraint,” Mr. Kimura said. “Otherwise, the flow of money will dry up and we will be psychologically depressed.”

Some, however, believe that the self-imposed cutbacks by businesses and consumers, which may be a drag on the economy, may have the unintended effect of helping people reset their priorities.

“I got used to people saving electricity,” said Kazuko Kukita, 65, a retiree. “We used to consume too much energy before the disaster.”

Ken Ijichi and Moshe Komata contributed reporting.