

Fukushima operator seeks yet more money

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An Air Photo Service picture shows the Fukushima power plant's number three (left) and four reactors shortly after the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in March 2011. The operator of Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant on Thursday sought yet more money to pay ballooning bills for compensating victims of last year's disaster.

The operator of Japan's crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant on Thursday sought yet more money to pay ballooning bills for compensating victims of last year's disaster.

[Tokyo Electric](#) Power Co. (TEPCO) said it had newly estimated the compensation costs at 3.24 trillion yen (\$38 billion), up 697 billion yen from its last calculation in March.

The utility has increased the estimate three times since it originally put the sum at 1.1 trillion yen in October last year, seven months after a [massive earthquake](#) and tsunami sparked reactor meltdowns at the plant, forcing tens of thousands of people to evacuate.

TEPCO said it had already received about 1.5 trillion yen in such aid.

The new increase has become necessary after areas for mandatory evacuation were expanded and some voluntary evacuees were made eligible for compensation, the company said in a statement.

A public-private body—the Nuclear Damage Liability Facilitation Fund—created last year to deal with the [nuclear disaster](#), is providing the aid which must be repaid by TEPCO in the future.

The fund is expected to consider the request in the New Year, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said.

TEPCO also faces a growing bill, estimated at more than 10 trillion yen, for the work to dismantle the crippled plant and to clean areas polluted by radiation.

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