Six dead after floods in central Japan: media

Tokyo (AFP) – Heavy rain that triggered floods and landslides on a Japanese penisula recovering from an earthquake this year killed at least six people, local media reported Monday.

Public broadcaster NHK and other outlets said six were dead, while a fire department official told AFP that one had died and five were “in a state of cardio-respiratory arrest”, a term used in Japan before a feared death can be confirmed by a doctor.

The regional government in Ishikawa on the Sea of Japan coast said two were missing and the status of eight people was unknown.

Heavy rain pounded Ishikawa from Saturday, with more than 540 millimetres (21 inches) recorded in the city of Wajima over 72 hours, the heaviest continuous rain since comparative data became available.

The region is still reeling from a magnitude-7.5 quake at the start of the year, which toppled buildings, triggered tsunami waves and sparked a major fire.



Firefighters search for missing people, through debris washed up after heavy rains caused flooding, in the city of Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture © STR / JIJI Press/AFP

Floodwaters inundated emergency housing built for those who had lost their homes in the New Year's Day quake, which killed at least 374 people, according to Ishikawa government figures.

On Monday, a total of 4,000 households were left without power after the rain, according to the Hokuriku Electric Power Company.

More than 100 areas in the region were isolated, with roads blocked due to landslides.

Akemi Yamashita, a 54-year-old Wajima resident, told AFP she had been driving on Saturday when "within only 30 minutes or so, water gushed into the street and quickly rose to half the height of my car".

"I was talking to other residents of Wajima yesterday, and they said, 'it's so heart-breaking to live in this city'. I

got teary when I heard that," she said, describing the earthquake and floods as "like something from a movie".

In Wajima on Sunday, splintered branches and a huge uprooted tree piled up at a bridge over a river where the raging brown waters almost reached ground level.

Military personnel were sent to the Ishikawa region to join rescue workers over the weekend, as tens of thousands of residents were urged to evacuate.

The areas under the emergency warning saw "heavy rain of unprecedented levels", JMA forecaster Satoshi Sugimoto said on Saturday, adding: "It is a situation in which you have to secure your safety immediately".

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