

Court Recognizes Death Caused By Nearby Plant

The Associated Press

KOBE, Aug. 7 (Kyodo) — The Kobe District Court ruled Tuesday that a man who lived near a plant of Kubota Corp. died of mesothelioma caused by asbestos used at the plant, ordering the major machinery maker to pay around 31.9 million yen in damages to his bereaved family.

It was the first time for a court to recognize corporate responsibility for asbestos-related illness in residents living near plants.

The damages suit was filed by relatives of Kojiro Yamauchi, 80, who had worked near Kubota's plant in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture, and Ayako Yasui, 85, who lived around 1 kilometer away from it.

The plaintiffs sought around 79 million yen in damages in total from Kubota and the state, rather than accepting the company's compensation.

While denying the state was liable, Presiding Judge Yoshihiro Konishi accepted the claim of Yamauchi's family, but rejected the demand of Yasui's relatives, saying the court could not establish a causal link between her death and asbestos.

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