

3.HOW MANY MINAMATA DISEASE VICTIMS ARE THERE?



Minamata Disease Victims' Memorial Service

As of April 30, 1997, the number of people in Kumamoto and Kagoshima prefectures who had applied for certification as Minamata disease victims numbered more than 17,000. Of these 2,265 (of which 1,484 have passed away by January 31, 2003)were certified by the government. Moreover, there are 11,540 persons set as the object of the Minamata disease synthesis measure medical enterprise which carried out the last decision in 1997 also including the person who had already died. Therefore, the victim permitted the influence of mercury by administration for the moment can call it 13,805 persons. However, there are some people who died before the official discovery of Minamata disease, and others who died after the discovery without submitting an application form for official recognition and / or for medical assistance. Furthermore, some people did not apply for compensation for other various reasons, so it is impossible to know the exact number of victims.

The disease did not occur only in the Minamata area. In 1965 Minamata disease broke out along the Agano River in Niigata prefecture, caused by mercury discharged by the Showa Denko corporation. Ill-health or damage to one's health as a result of mercury poisoning caused by factories was also reported in China and Canada. In recent years rivers and lakes in the Amazon and Tanzania polluted by mercury have created serious health concerns.