

Hospitals admit scores of 'hanami' revelers

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While thousands of Tokyoites safely enjoyed "hanami" (cherry blossom viewing) parties last weekend, 74 people in the metropolis ended up in the hospital over the weekend after abusing alcohol, the Tokyo Fire Department said Monday.

In all, 110 people in Tokyo were taken by ambulance to hospitals for alcohol poisoning between March 31 — the official start of the hanami season in Tokyo — and Monday morning, the fire department said.

While 23 were hospitalized, none of the cases was judged severe, the fire department said. About half of the victims, or 52 people, were in their 20s, while the oldest was an eightysomething man, it said.

The number was more than double the figure from last year, when many refrained from holding hanami parties because of the March 11 disasters, a fire department official said. During last year's cherry blossom season, from March 28 and April 10, 48 people were taken to hospital for alcohol poisoning, he said.

This year's figure, however, was not exceptionally high, the official added.

One of those hospitalized was a 71-year-old man who was drinking at a park in Adachi Ward from around noon to 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.

Another was a 33-year-old man who was drinking with colleagues in a park in Itabashi Ward from around 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the same day, the fire department said.

Also in Tokyo, a 29-year-old drunken man reportedly jumped into the Sumida River in Chuo Ward on Sunday afternoon and was rescued by fellow passengers on a "yakatabune" party boat.

According to media reports, when the fire crew arrived at the site, passengers were holding the man's arms to keep him afloat in the river.

The man was hospitalized in critical condition with hypothermia from the near-drowning Sunday, the fire department said.

The fire department is advising cherry-blossom revelers to refrain from binge drinking or from drinking on an empty stomach.

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