

## Deadly Nagano ski bus crash

- 1) Another tragic accident involving a tour bus has occurred. Were adequate safety measures taken? A thorough probe must be conducted to prevent a recurrence of similar accidents.
- 2) A bus carrying university students and others to a ski resort veered off a bypass of National Highway Route 18 and plunged down a bank before dawn on Friday in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture. Two drivers, including a substitute, and 12 passengers were killed, and 26 others were injured, some seriously.
- 3) The accident took place on a mild left-hand curve that slopes downward, and the road was reportedly neither covered with snow nor frozen. There were no conditions under which an accident is likely to occur, but the bus crossed the center line into the opposite lane and knocked down the guardrail before plunging off the road.
- 4) What happened to the driver who was behind the wheel? A surviving passenger said his driving was “rough.” The bus fell just three meters below the road, but the crash had deadly consequences. The passengers may not have been thoroughly advised to wear seat belts.
- 5) The Nagano prefectural police have set up an investigation headquarters and searched the offices of a bus operating company in Tokyo, while the Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Ministry conducted a special audit of the company. Due to the deaths of the two drivers, it is expected to be difficult to investigate the cause of the accident, but it is essential to unravel the circumstances in which the accident occurred.
- 6) Organized by a Tokyo travel agency, the ski bus tour in question started late Thursday night in central Tokyo. The bus was scheduled to arrive at a ski resort in Nagano Prefecture Friday morning.
- 7) The accident happened on an ordinary road. According to its itinerary, the bus was supposed to travel on an expressway instead. Why was the route changed? The cause of the accident must be determined by clarifying points that are in question.
- 8) Overworked drivers have often been cited in past bus accidents. In the case of the accident that happened on the Kan-Etsu Expressway in Gunma Prefecture in 2012, killing seven people, it was revealed that the driver had driven the bus throughout the night despite a lack of sleep. As a result, disregard for safety in operational control was identified as a social problem.
- 9) Many regulations have been toughened in the wake of the 2012 accident, including the limit on how far one person can drive at night, the ceiling on daily driving hours and how frequently drivers must rest.
- 10) The latest accident occurred about three hours after departure. Efforts must be made quickly to ascertain facts about the health management of the drivers, including how many hours of sleep they had before they left.
- 11) Of concern is the fact that the bus operating company was slapped with an administrative sanction by the transport ministry two days before the accident. One of the buses owned by the company was suspended from operation because it was revealed that 10 of the firm’s drivers had not undergone health checkups.  
The company cannot avoid criticism for neglecting the principle of safety first, which is most important for a bus company. An investigation must also be conducted into what kind of in-house education was provided.
- 12) An accident involving a bus carrying a large number of passengers could result in a huge disaster. This latest accident has sounded an extremely grave alarm amid the more than 500 accidents involving chartered buses that occur each year.

audit:監査 unravel:解明する ascertain:確かめる undergo health checkup:健康診断を受ける in-house:社内の

### ★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. Have you ever taken an overnight bus? How was your experience?
2. Despite the records of accidents, overnight buses are still popular. What do you think the reasons are?
3. How grave is the responsibility of the bus operator in question?
4. What measures should the bus industry take to ensure safety?
5. Do you ski? What kind of activities do you like to do in winter?
6. Make sentences using the following words: substitute, recurrence, plunge, audit unravel, in-house and undergo.

今回の事故はこの30年間で最も死者の多いバス事故となった。亡くなった乗客13名は19～22歳の大学生だった。貸し切りバス業者間での価格競争の激化、格安バスツアー人気や訪日客の増加などにもよる慢性的な運転手不足、それに伴う運転手の過度な負担と高齢化などさまざまな問題が事故の背景にはあるようだ。