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Agency, chief face charges over tiger

Yomiuri Shimbun

The Tokyo metropolitan government will file charges against an agency that leases animals early next week in connection with the death of a 25-year-old employee who was mauled to death by a tiger owned by the firm, metropolitan officials said Wednesday.

The agency's president will also be charged.

The local government will charge Ikeda Animal Production, based in Machida, Tokyo, and Motosaburo Ikeda with keeping a dangerous animal without permission, the officials said.

According to a metropolitan ordinance, permission from the metropolitan governor is needed before a tiger can be kept, since it is potentially dangerous. However, the agency failed to obtain permission after it purchased the tiger from a company in Chiba Prefecture in October 1997, according to officials of the health bureau of the metropolitan government. The penalty for violating the ordinance is imprisonment for up to a year, or a fine of up to ¥100,000.

Staff of the metropolitan government inspected the agency's facility in late January, immediately prior to the accident. However, the company failed to inform the inspectors that it was keeping a tiger there, the officials said.

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