

## Train accident injuries rise, death toll drops to 50

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Workers use cranes and diggers to remove a train wreckage from a stretch of railroad in Hualien County yesterday.

**Photo: Tu Chien-jung, Taipei Times**

The number of people injured in a Taiwan Railways Administration (TRA) train accident in Hualien County on Friday has increased to 200, the Central Emergency Operation Center (CEOC) said.

As of press time last night, the confirmed death toll had been revised from 51 to 50 by the Hualien District Prosecutors' Office after DNA testing.

Of the injured, 45 are still in hospital, including three people who are in critical condition, CEOC commander and Deputy Minister of Transportation and Communications Wang Kwo-tsai (王國材) said.

Authorities have confirmed the identities of 48 of those who died, the CEOC said.

Wang told a news conference that the resumption of train services on the damaged line has been postponed from Thursday to April 20, as that section of the railway requires closer examination.

The accident occurred at 9:28am on Friday, when Taroko Express No. 408, traveling from New Taipei City to Taitung, hit a crane truck as it entered the Gingshuei Tunnel (錦山隧道) in Hualien's Sioulin Township (秀林鄉).

The first five carriages of the train derailed and piled up inside the narrow, single-track tunnel.

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Investigators are looking into the possibility that the crane truck, which had been parked on a slope, slid down onto the track because its parking brake was not properly engaged, either as a result of mechanical failure or negligence, the CEOC said.

The investigation would focus on the condition of the truck's parking brake, and would seek to determine administrative responsibility within two months, Wang said.

The TRA would be required to review its standard operating procedure for awarding contracts and supervising its construction projects, and improve safety management at its construction sites, he added.

The Hualien District Court last night granted prosecutors' request to detain Lee Yi-hsiang (李易祥), the driver of the crane truck, after he was released on NT\$500,000 bail on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) yesterday announced a special program allowing overseas family members to return to Taiwan to attend the funerals of those who died in the accident or visit the injured under relaxed quarantine rules.

They would be exempt from providing a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test obtained within three days of boarding a plane to Taiwan if they sign an affidavit (<https://reurl.cc/9ZL15n>), the CECC said, adding that a test would be arranged for them at Taoyuan General Hospital after arrival.

For the first five days after entering Taiwan, eligible individuals would be allowed to apply for compassionate leave from home quarantine for four hours per day after producing a negative PCR test result every two days.

From the sixth day after their arrival, they would be allowed to take a PCR test every three days if they need to apply for compassionate leave from quarantine, it said.

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