

The experiences of support for persons with special needs in the area affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake: cases in Minami-Sanriku, Miyagi Prefecture.

Yayoi Kitamura (National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan)

Yasuo Honda (Fukuoka University, Japan)

Background: Persons with disabilities have difficulties to get information on evacuation and to move to and live in local shelters. Therefore disaster preparedness is one of the most important issues for independent living for persons with disabilities. Although Japanese government have encouraged the local communities to prepare lists of persons with special needs for natural disasters to inform emergency and help evacuation, local communities do not have enough experiences to deal with disability issues.

Purpose: This study examined the effectiveness of the individual evacuation plans for persons with special needs in communities.

Methods: Interviews were conducted for 2 of 50 welfare commissioners in Minami-Sanriku Town, Miyagi Prefecture where 4.6% of the total population, 17,000 and 13.3% of persons with disabilities were lost by Tsunami at Great East Japan Earthquake, 2011. Evacuation plans and evacuation behaviors of registered persons with disabilities to the list by the local community were inquired.

Result:

1) One of the commissioners who brought the list with her at the evacuation, followed the registered persons' safety. Local residents and local service providers helped most of the registered persons with vehicles in the area that showed less mortality of registered persons with special needs compared with the district population. However, one blind elderly lady suffered because she and her family thought that the tsunami would not arrive at their home on a hill and did not evacuate.

- Although the other commissioner helped 4 registered persons with local residents and local service providers with vehicles, she did not know about the mortality rate at her area.

- Less than 10% of persons with disabilities had registered to the list of the town.

Discussion: It was suggested that in addition to high level of awareness on disaster evacuation, on persons with disabilities, on providing prepared help by community residents, vehicles worked to reduce the mortality of persons with special needs in the district. Further studies are required on evacuation methods, training methods of evacuation and encouragement to register to the list of emergency evacuation for persons with disabilities.



Fig. 1 The location of Minami-Sanriku town in Japan. (cited from Wikipedia)



Fig.2 Crisis Management Department's building. Only 4 officers including the mayor survived at the top of the tower. (cited from <http://labaq.com/archives/51650134.html>)

Table 1 Number of registered person and their mortality rate at Minami-Sanriku town and X-district.

Region		Aged single person	Aged household	Elderly in need of care	PWD	The other	total
X District	Registered	8	17	5	5	0	33
	Loss	0	0*	0*	1	0	3
	Mortality rate	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	3.0
Town	Registered	165	162	66	86	11	490
	Loss	15	24	11	13	0	63
	Mortality rate	9.1	14.8	16.7	15.1	0.0	12.9

Table 2. The number of people with disabilities and the mortality rate at Minami-Sanriku Town (cited from a report by Minami-Sanriku town)

Disability	total	Affected	%
Mobility	713	50	15.8
Visual		11	
Hearing		11	
The other physical		41	
Intellectual	146	5	3.4
Mental	81	7	8.6
Chronic diseases	(118)	-	-
Total	940	125	13.3

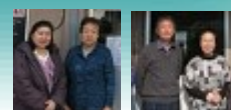


The Minami Sanriku evacuation shelter is a makeshift home to nearly 1,000 displaced people as they pick up the pieces following the tsunami. Link to video: Japan's Tsunami survivors gather in shelter.



Fig.4 Temporary housing for evacuees. Slope was build additionally for a wheel chair user.

Fig.3 An evacuation shelter. (cited from J. Watts(www.thegaudian.com))



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