

Section 3 Study Group on Evacuation Concerning the Series of Heavy Rain Disasters from July 2021

(1) Background of the Study

By the amendment of the "Basic Act on Disaster Management" (Act No. 223 of 1961) in May 2021, reconsiderations such as merging evacuation recommendation and evacuation instruction into "evacuation instruction," and clarifying the timing of evacuation were made to inform the public of evacuation information simply. However, a series of heavy rains from July 2021 caused debris flow which killed many people, floods and inundation which gave damages successively. Based on this series of heavy rain disasters, the Cabinet Office established the "Study Group on Evacuation Concerning the Series of Heavy Rain Disasters since July 2021" (hereafter referred to as the "study group" in this section) to discuss proper evacuation actions for residents and appropriate announcements of evacuation information by the municipality. In light of the discussion in the study group, "Regarding the Way of Evacuation Concerning the Series of Heavy Rain Disasters since July 2021 (Report)" was published on February 4, 2022.

(Reference: <https://www.bousai.go.jp/fusuigai/r3hinanworking/index.html>)

(2) Summary of the Report

In this report, the main direction of correspondence has been shown as follows:

1. Regarding the Direction of Correspondence for Promoting Residents to Proper Evacuation Actions

Since it is difficult to announce evacuation information according to each individual's situation as disaster has been getting extremely severe and more frequent, and a final decision of evacuation is left to the individual's judgment, the public needs to be aware of protecting their lives on their own and take evacuation actions with their own judgment.

A shift to such resident-initiated disaster countermeasures cannot be achieved overnight but it is necessary to continue education and awareness building for disaster risk reduction tenaciously in each region, which is to foster a "culture of disaster risk reduction."

[Enhancement of the Public Awareness of Protecting Their Lives on Their Own]

When we study cases where proper evacuation saved people in past disasters, we learn that conducting disaster preparedness activities regularly in their regions initiated by disaster risk reduction leaders has enhanced the public awareness of disaster risk reduction. Hence, the development of local disaster risk reduction leaders is essential. Also, residents must take the initiative to join participative, experiential and practical disaster preparedness activities to strengthen regional disaster resilience.

In addition, in disaster risk reduction education for children, although the school safety promotion plan and the National Curriculum Standards have been revised and disaster risk reduction education has successively been developed, some of these programs have become a mere formality. Local communities and schools need to collaborate to consistently promote practical education for disaster risk reduction so that children can learn the awareness of protecting their lives on their own and become future players in local disaster management.

It is expected that reinforcing the collaboration between regional residents and the municipality by the Community Disaster Management Planning System and utilizing the strengths of self-help, mutual support and public support lead to effective evacuation actions. In regions where people are proactively working on improving community disaster resilience through participative, experiential disaster preparedness activities and practical education for disaster risk reduction, it is key to make community disaster management plans to enhance and establish further awareness of disaster risk reduction.

[Communicating the Urgency and Realism of Disaster with the Public to Encourage Evacuation Actions]

To save as many lives as possible from disaster, along with consistent measures to have the disaster risk reduction culture take root, measures that encourage evacuation based on characteristics of human behavior are keys as well to enhance the effectiveness of evacuation in an early phase of a disaster. Utilizing digital technologies is also important so that residents can recognize an urgency and a realistic sensation of disaster and recognize its danger.

2. The Direction of Correspondence for Proper Announcements of Evacuation Information by the Municipality

The administration is required to ensure that the public has the awareness of protecting their lives on their own through disaster risk reduction education and awareness building in ordinary times as well as fully support residents in evacuating with their own judgment when a disaster occurs. An evacuation announcement is particularly a critical duty of a mayor of a municipality to protect their lives during a disaster.

The administration needs to understand the necessity of the shift to this resident-initiated disaster management very well. On top of this understanding, it is essential to improve the disaster response-ability through human resource development in the municipality and enhancement of expert support for the municipality to enable proper evacuation announcements.

[Enhancement of Understanding Disaster Response in the Municipality]

Municipalities must deepen their understanding of disaster response by developing human resources with knowledge and establish rules of evacuation announcement before a disaster occurs so that they can smoothly respond to a disaster whether or not they have experience of disaster.

[Improvement of Technical Support for the Municipality]

Along with reinforcement of the disaster response-ability of the municipality, it is critical to improve support such as technical advice from experts for the municipality so that they can judge based on advanced and experts' information.

Evacuation Procedures in Regards to the Series of Heavy Rain Disasters since July 2021 (summary)

The society we aim for	Residents	Have a sense of "protecting one's own lives"
	Administration	Provides full support in order for residents to be able to take appropriate evacuation measures

Residents	<p>Issue Residents may not be able to take appropriate evacuation measures despite the announcement of evacuation information</p> <p>(1) Is each resident's awareness to "protect one's own lives" low?</p> <p>Individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important for residents not only to understand the disaster risks and evacuation measures in their community on a regular basis, but also to proactively obtain disaster information in the event of a disaster. However, some people are not properly aware of this. <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In regions where evacuation is highly effective, local leaders of disaster prevention play an important role. However, there are not enough trained leaders nationally. Some communities consider disasters as "something their own matter" by taking practical approaches that are participatory and hands-on. Nationally, these efforts are limited to some regions. Through the involvement in Community Disaster Management Plan, residents need to proactively participate in preparing their plan in conjunction with strengthening the sharing information on community disaster prevention among residents. It is important to further improve the level of preparation for disasters within the community, but the understanding the necessity and purpose of Community Disaster Management Plans are not enough. <p>Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all elementary and junior high schools conduct evacuation drills nationally, but only few schools have conducted drills that fit their community-specific disaster prevention issues. Some drills have also become routine and a mere formality. <p>(2) The sense of urgency and realism of the disaster may not be conveyed to the residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although there are examples where residents are encouraged to evacuate in the event of a disaster through alerts to each other and provision of realistic images, the spread of such efforts is not always enough. 	<p>Actions to promote appropriate evacuation behavior among residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the midst of increasingly severe and frequent disasters, it is difficult to deliver evacuation information that is appropriate for each individual's situation, which leaves the final decision to evacuate to them. Therefore, it is necessary for residents to be aware of "protecting one's own lives" and proactively take evacuation measures. It is necessary to persistently and continuously conduct efforts of education and awareness-raising activities on disaster prevention in the community to foster a "culture of disaster preparedness" since this mindset of disaster prevention awareness by residents cannot be achieved overnight Furthermore, efforts to improve the effectiveness of evacuation at an early stage is also important, along with the consistent effort to instill a culture of disaster risk reduction <p>(1) Raising each resident's awareness of "protecting one's own lives"</p> <p>Promotion of disaster risk reduction education within the local community</p> <p>Action 1: Develop leaders who will play a central role in local disaster risk reduction activities Action 2: Develop practical disaster risk reduction activities that are participatory and hands-on</p> <p>Promotion of disaster risk reduction education at schools</p> <p>Action 3: Implement practical disaster risk reduction education in all elementary and junior high schools Action 4: Support disaster risk reduction education through collaboration of the local community and schools</p> <p>Promotion of the preparation of Community Disaster Management Plans</p> <p>Action 5: Improve local disaster preparedness through promotion of preparation of community disaster management plans</p> <p>(2) Encourage evacuation to residents by conveying the sense of urgency and realism of a disaster</p> <p>Action 6: Promote efforts that effectively encourage residents to evacuate based on characteristics of human behavior Action 7: Promote actions that encourage evacuation through the use of technology related to digital disaster prevention</p>
Administration	<p>Issue The municipalities may be inappropriately delivering evacuation information such as hesitating to issue evacuation information.</p> <p>(1) The understanding of disaster response in municipalities may not be sufficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities are to respond to disasters in order to protect the residents lives, bodies and their properties from disasters, but some municipalities do not have enough understanding on disaster response including their preparedness on a regular basis, due to their lack of experience with disasters. <p>(2) It may be difficult to make technical decisions in issuing evacuation information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities issue evacuation information in reference to weather information related with disaster prevention, but technical background is needed to make judgements on continuously changing information. Some municipalities lack staff with technical abilities, which leads to difficulty in making technical judgements. <p>(3) There may be a psychological strain in issuing evacuation information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The delivery of evacuation information calls for residents to take specific actions, however it is concerning when resident's confidence in evacuation information drops, due to no disasters occurring even after the delivery of evacuation information. There are also even higher risks of residents such as to be infected with COVID-19 and to be affected by the disaster during evacuation by requiring them to take evacuation measures. 	<p>Actions to be taken by municipalities to issue appropriate evacuation information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipalities should ensure that residents are fully aware of "protecting one's own lives" through disaster risk reduction education and raising awareness on a regular basis. In the event of a disaster, it is important to fully support residents to take proactive evacuation measures. Specifically, issuing evacuation information is a critical mission of the municipal mayor in order to protect the lives of the residents in times of disaster. It is important for the administration to firmly understand the need for the shift of resident-led disaster prevention measures. With this understanding, it is also necessary to improve the capability of disaster response by training municipal staff and enhancing support from experts and others in order to deliver evacuation information appropriately. <p>(1) Improvement of the understanding of disaster response in municipalities</p> <p>Action 8: Enhance training of mayors of municipalities and persons in charge of risk management to issue evacuation information appropriately Action 9: Promote initiatives to target areas with high disaster risk for issuing disaster information, to reduce false alarms and to make residents feel involved</p> <p>(2) Enhance technical assistance to municipalities</p> <p>Action 10: Support municipalities in issuing evacuation information by providing technical advice from national and prefectural governments and meteorological experts</p>

Source: Cabinet Office data
 (Reference: https://www.bousai.go.jp/fusuigai/r3hinanworking/pdf/hokoku_gaiyo.pdf)

Recently, heavy rain disasters have become extremely severe and more frequent. To protect our important lives against disaster, it is key that we always recognize that disaster can happen anywhere, anytime as well as foster the culture of disaster risk reduction by making disaster preparation natural in our daily lives. On the other hand, the administration must do everything to support the people in acting to protect their lives against disaster.

In response to the conclusion of the study group, this report shows their high expectations that the public and the administration work together on the measures to achieve a disaster-aware society so that as few people as possible will be affected by disaster. For establishing the resident-initiated disaster preparedness measures, correspondences shown in this report will be promoted.