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.

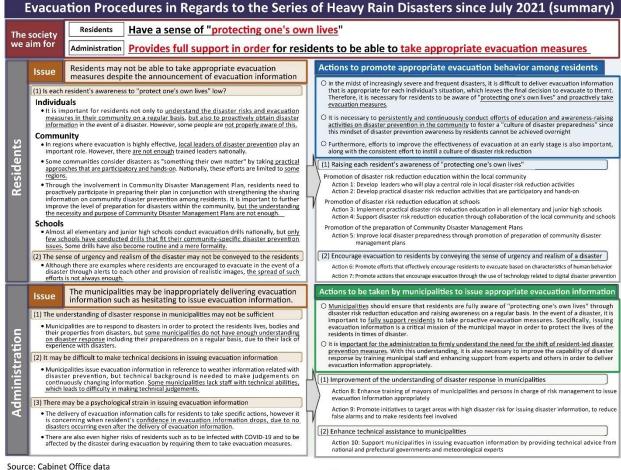
The administration needs to understand the necessity of the shift to this resident-initiated disaster management very well. On top of this understanding, it is essential to improve the disaster response-ability through human resource development in the municipality and enhancement of expert support for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



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 prepardness measures, correspondences shown in this report will be promoted.