

Recovery from the Great East Japan
Earthquake and Tsunami
–Recommendations from Iwate–

Iwate Prefecture

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About this Collection of Recommendations

■Purpose of Creation

Ever since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Iwate Prefecture has been working on recovery and reconstruction on an unprecedented scale and an unprecedented level of organization, with the help of a great deal of support from home and abroad. In March 2020, nine years after the earthquake, a collection of recommendations, "Recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami: Recommendations from Iwate," was compiled based on the prefecture's past reconstruction efforts and lessons learned in order to prepare for future disasters and to contribute to improving the disaster preparedness of Japan as a whole by sharing the contents of the proposal to the public.

Using selected items from the collection such as unique initiatives or lessons learned, we have prepared an English version of the recommendations, with some data updated, for foreign government officials and others to reference in formulating their disaster response plans.

■Roles of the National, Prefectural and Municipal Governments

The Basic Act on Disaster Management (Act No. 223 of 1961) defines the basic principles of disaster control and the responsibilities of the national, prefectural, and municipal governments based on these fundamental principles as follows.

○Basic Philosophy of Disaster Countermeasures (excerpt)

Considering the natural characteristics of Japan, it is always assumed that a disaster may occur, taking into account changes in Japan's population, industries, and other social and economic conditions, and efforts are made to minimize damage and achieve a prompt recovery if a disaster occurs.

In the event of a disaster, efforts must be made promptly to restore facilities, aid victims, and achieve recovery.

○Responsibilities of the National Government (Summary)

Based on the basic principles and in light of the mission of protecting the national land and lives, bodies and properties of citizens from disasters, the State has the responsibility to take all possible measures concerning disaster management by mobilizing all its organizations and functions.

To perform the responsibilities prescribed in the preceding paragraph, the State must formulate a plan on which disaster management, emergency disaster control measures, and disaster recovery efforts are to be based, implement the plan on the basis of laws and regulations, pursue the implementation of affairs or operations concerning disaster management handled by local governments, designated public corporations, and designated local public corporations, undertake the overall coordination of the implementation, and ensure that the burden of expenses related to a disaster is appropriate.

○Responsibilities of Prefectures (Summary)

Based on the basic principles and in the interest of protecting the area of a prefecture, and the lives, bodies, and properties of its residents from disaster, the prefecture has the responsibility to formulate a disaster management plan concerning an area of the relevant prefecture with the cooperation of related organs and other local governments, implement the

plan on the basis of laws and regulations, and at the same time, assist in the implementation of affairs or operations concerning disaster management handled by municipalities and designated local public corporations within the area, and undertake the overall coordination of the implementation.

○Responsibilities of Municipalities (Summary)

Based on the basic principles and in the interest of protecting the area of a municipality, and the lives, bodies, and properties of its residents from disaster, as a local government at the base level, the municipality has the responsibility to formulate a disaster management plan concerning the area of the relevant municipality with the cooperation of related organs and other local governments, and implement the plan on the basis of laws and regulations.

In order to fulfill responsibilities under the preceding paragraph, the mayor of the municipality must endeavor to sufficiently employ all capabilities of the municipality, by keeping the organization of fire-fighting organs, flood prevention units, etc., in good condition, by enhancing organizations related to disaster management, voluntary disaster management organizations, and other public groups within the area of the municipality, and by promoting voluntary disaster management activities among the residents.

■Main Audience of the Recommendations

This report is intended to serve as a guide for prefectural government officials and others involved in disaster preparedness and countermeasures, to help them prepare for future disasters and take appropriate action when responding to disasters and during recovery/reconstruction efforts. The report also provides recommendations based on our experiences regarding the systems and financial resources under the jurisdiction of the national government, which are important in the recovery and reconstruction efforts. We hope that this report will serve as reference for future disaster response in regions other than Iwate Prefecture.

■Report Structure

At the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai in March 2015, Iwate Prefecture compiled examples of disaster reduction and recovery efforts and the resulting recommendations, sharing them domestically and internationally as the "Proposal from Iwate Prefecture about Disaster Risk Reduction and Reconstruction".

This report also incorporates these examples and recommendations.

- Chapter 1: Outline of Iwate Prefecture introduces Iwate Prefecture's area, population, number of households, economic growth rate and industries.
- Chapter 2: Overview of Damage Caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami summarizes the scale of the earthquake and tsunami disaster, as well as the general state of damage in the prefecture.
- Chapter 3: Correspondence with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 summarizes the four priority actions to be implemented by all stakeholders as defined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the correlation with this collection of recommendations.
- Chapter 4: Prefectural Initiatives summarizes excerpts from Recovery from the Great East

Japan Earthquake and Tsunami: Recommendations from Iwate, explaining the initiatives implemented by the prefecture as well as lessons learned and recommendations made from these initiatives.

- Section 1: Initial Response and Emergency Measures and Section 2: Restoration and Recovery Efforts include a selection of disaster response efforts immediately after the disaster and subsequent restoration and recovery efforts in chronological order.
- Section 3: Countermeasures for Radiation Effects lists the measures the prefecture has taken since the accident at the TEPCO Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. This section also includes Establishment of a System for Responding to Nuclear Power Plant Accidents among other measures the prefecture has taken since the accident.
- Section 4: Initiatives Beyond the Existing Framework summarizes a selection of the unique initiatives that the prefectural government has been implementing in response to the actual conditions in the affected areas, while making proposals to the national government in order to accurately respond to various issues as it promotes recovery and reconstruction from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

■At the Time of Writing

“Recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami: Proposals from Iwate” was edited in the 2019 fiscal year and published in March 2020.

The English version of the book was edited in the 2023 fiscal year and published in March 2025.