



The 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes

Response of Mashiki Town Government

General Affairs Division, Mashiki town government, Kumamoto

1 Introduction

We very much appreciate the support, which started immediately after the Kumamoto Earthquakes this April, from the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), the fire service, the police, the national government and the prefectural government, as well as municipalities, groups and organizations, and many people from all over the country. Here we will explain the response of Mashiki town government to the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes.

2 Damage situation from the Kumamoto Earthquakes in Mashiki Town

In the town which registered a seismic intensity of 7 twice, once during the foreshock on the night of April 14 and again during the main shock in the early hours of April 16, more than 20 people lost their precious lives. Housing damage was also extensive all over the town with a total of 3,343 fully-destroyed houses, 3,350 half-destroyed houses, and 4,382 partially-damaged houses as of September 27. There was a peak of 16,050 evacuees including stay-in-car-victims the morning after the main shock.



Damage from the Kumamoto Earthquakes in Mashiki Town

3 Response of Mashiki town government to the Kumamoto Earthquakes

(1) Response just after the Earthquakes

After the foreshock on April 14, many staff members came running to the town office, but the office was in disarray and a power outage made it impossible to use power sources or communications equipment. Therefore, we carried our whiteboards, tables, projectors, etc. out to the parking area on the south side of the town office building to set up the on-site response headquarters. We also set up the local disaster response headquarters in the municipal health and welfare center where power sources and communication equipment were available. The main responses of the town government just after the Earthquakes were as follows:

- Gathering information on damage, etc.
- Calls for service from the JSDF via Kumamoto prefectural government
- Cooperation and coordination with the JSDF, the fire service and the police

- Calls for dispatch of mobile power supply vehicles
- Setting up and staffing evacuation centers
- Aid requests for blankets, water and food, and their distribution
- Requesting the police to regulate traffic
- Requesting the volunteer fire corps to close roads showing subsidence, etc.

After the main shock, the town office building faced a growing risk of collapse and became off limits. Therefore, the usual town office functions were suspended, and those other than staff in charge of restoring roads or lifeline utilities including water and sewage works could do nothing but work for the disaster response headquarters or operate the evacuation centers.

(2) Setting up project teams

Around 10 days after the earthquakes, the town started to shift from a chaotic period to the preparation phase for recovery and reconstruction.

We set up the following four project teams on April 25 to respond to the urgent problems we were facing.

- 1) The “Evacuation Center Measures Team” to improve the environment in the evacuation centers, and provide medical and welfare support
- 2) The “Housing Support Team” to provide housing support such as the selection of construction sites for emergency temporary housing, private rental housing-turned-temporary housing units, and emergency repairs
- 3) The “Disaster Certification Team” to conduct surveys to certify damaged houses and issue disaster certificates

- 4) The “Town Office Function Reconstruction Team” to resume the town office’s usual work in the situation where the government building was affected and unusable

These four project teams took the initiative to address the urgent problems we were facing in cooperation with backup officials from the national government, Kumamoto prefectural government and other municipalities.

4 Recovery and reconstruction from the Kumamoto Earthquakes

- (1) Formulation of the Mashiki Town basic policy for reconstruction from the Earthquakes

On July 6, the Mashiki Town basic policy for reconstruction from the Earthquakes was formulated to demonstrate the basic attitude and direction toward future community development, aiming for reconstruction from the Kumamoto Earthquakes. Based on this basic policy, the Mashiki Town reconstruction plan will be formulated before the end of the year as a comprehensive plan toward reconstruction.

- (2) Development of emergency temporary housing

Construction of emergency temporary housing started on May 6 and people started moving in on June 14. Eventually 1,556 housing units in 17 temporary housing complexes will be built and everyone will have moved in by mid-October.



Development of emergency temporary housing

5 Conclusion

Five months have passed since the Kumamoto Earthquakes, and our disaster response measures have mostly been completed. We have begun our work toward reconstruction gradually. We would like to fully examine our responses to the Kumamoto Earthquakes and use these examination results to review the local disaster management plan and for resilient community development.

(3) Publicly-funded dismantling and clearance of collapsed houses, etc.

The town government started dismantling and clearing those houses assessed as half-destroyed or fully-destroyed and holding disaster certificates on July 7. We expect to clear roughly 3,000 houses and plan to complete the process by March 2018.



Dismantling and clearance of a collapsed house