

Vol. 1

Lessons from the
West Japan Floods and Rain Disaster /
Protect the Lives of Your Kids and Family from Flood

Disaster Preparedness Guide for Parents and Kids

- Protection through evacuation -



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Message to parents

The West Japan Flood and Rain Disaster hit us in July 2018. We had never imagined that our hometown would be flooded by heavy rains.

In the Kawabe area of Mabi Town in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture, more than 99% of homes were flooded to some degree. Muddy water came waist-high on the second floor in the worst cases. In addition, no evacuation shelters were available because the entire area was almost completely flooded. As water approached, some people stayed at home and waited upstairs for rescue whereas others were at a loss about where to evacuate. Afterward, some recall life in an evacuation shelter with their children or cleaning up in the aftermath of the flood. Each family has a story that we can learn a lot from.

A flood is the only natural disaster for which we can prepare in advance to evacuate. If a flood occurs, the smartest thing to do is evacuate.

This Disaster Preparedness Guide for Parents and Kids is created based on questionnaires answered by parents in Mabi Town who experienced the flood.

We hope that our message would motivate you to consider timely evacuation. We also hope that this guide will help you to protect your life and the lives of your family in an emergency.

Satomi Makihara, President

West Japan Heavy Rain Victim Group
Kawabe Reconstruction Project ARUKU



What happened at that time ... flood experiences

■ We got sent to three evacuation shelters. It was mentally and physically exhausting.

My husband is a local resident and knows the history of floods in the area. He said "Don't worry. No need to evacuate," so I didn't worry. Then, I received messages from my mom friends: "We are going to evacuate." "We have evacuated!" "The evacuation shelter is full." We then heard an explosion from the aluminum factory in the neighboring City of Soja. So, filled with anxiety, we evacuated to a high place in the area instead of the designated evacuation shelter around one in the morning. We spent a sleepless night in our car on public grounds.

The following morning, we first moved to an elementary school in Soja City. They opened the library and provided a simple bathtub. Although we were relieved for a brief moment, we had to move again because the school was going to open the following day. The next place was a gymnasium also in Soja City. Because the gymnasium was not equipped with air conditioning, some people had a heat stroke. So, we moved once again according to the policy to prioritize kids and the elderly. The last place was a community center, again in Soja City. Although we were preferentially given the same room because we moved with other two families, we sent our kids to my parents' home outside Okayama Prefecture.

We had to go there and back to clean our house, go to the public bath, the laundromat, and the community center until we moved into the city's temporary housing about three weeks later.

Parents and kids (a two-year old, a four-year old (or a five-year old), and a first grader)

■ We could not see eye to eye with our parents-in-law living with us and got a late start evacuating. That caused us to have a hard time.

On that day, I was with my three kids and parents-in-law living with us at home. I felt nervous on the inside as the rain did not stop even after sunset. Feeling increasingly anxious in the evening, I decided to evacuate and started making preparations. When I told my in-laws, their response was not what I expected. They said that it was not necessary and so they wouldn't. My kids and I asked them to evacuate with us over and over but they would not prepare. I did not know what to do and called my husband to ask for help saying, "We can't just leave them here. Please come back as soon as possible and persuade them." In the end, my husband, who came home late in the evening, persuaded them and we finally started to evacuate together.

Because we started to evacuate late, the road to the evacuation shelter was crowded and the evacuation shelter was packed. We had difficulty just finding space for us to sit. This experience drove home to me how important it is for all family members to agree on when to start preparing to evacuate and when to start evacuating in order to evacuate well in advance.

Parents, kids (a five-year old (or a six-year old), a fourth grader, and a sixth grader), and parents-in-law





■ I would have regretted if we had ignored my daughter's "I'm scared."

That day I felt unusual with all the loud alert messages from my smartphone, disaster alerts broadcast outside, and the pouring rain. As we did not have transportation to evacuate until my husband came home from work, my daughter and I were nervously waiting for him.

When he came home, I was relieved. We could finally evacuate! But he just said "There's nothing to worry about" and that he would not evacuate. Although at first I was persuaded by his words, **my daughter was so scared and insisted on evacuating. At last, he reluctantly agreed.**

It was in the middle of the night. Water overflowed from drainage ditches and the border between the ditch and the road was not visible. On top of that, the road to the evacuation shelter was gridlocked. As the car was not able to move further, I was worried thinking that the car might be swept away if the river floods now and wondering what we should do if my daughter has to go to the bathroom. Although we could not reach the evacuation shelter, we managed to **sleep in our car at a high place with restrooms in the area and all of us were safe.**

I realized that it is necessary to evacuate **when even one of your family members wants to do so.**

Parents and a five-year old (or a six-year old)

■ It is important to take evacuation into account if you decide to have pets.

Our family did not evacuate that day. **We had two kittens but did not have a pet carrier bag to take them to the evacuation shelter.**

I was anxious and couldn't sleep. When I woke up around five in the morning on July 7, the toilet wouldn't flush. "That's odd," I thought. Then, the roads around our house started to flood. **Thinking we need to evacuate after all, we went to our car, but before we realized it, the muddy water suddenly came and reached as high as the chest of our son, a second grader.** My husband held our crying son and we hurried back inside. Although we went upstairs, the rapidly rising water reached 60 cm above the upstairs floor. Having no idea how high the water was going to go, I was scared to death. We thought we would have to swim and had our kids wear life jackets, but we were eventually rescued and we all survived, including our cats.

Not evacuating early enough caused us to put our kids through a traumatic experience and we increased the burden on the rescuers. It is absolutely important to evacuate early. **If you have pets, you should prepare for their evacuation as well.**

Parents and kids (a second grader, a fourth grader, and a sixth grader) and two cats

\ Hold a family meeting to prepare for disaster. /



Where

\ Hold a family meeting to prepare for disaster. /

1. Decide where to evacuate.

| Public evacuation shelters could be full.

Where is the best place for you to evacuate to **avoid danger?**



Tips

- Think of about three candidate evacuation places.

Change where you will evacuate according to conditions (such as road disconnection). Will you evacuate by car or on foot?



- If your home is in a flood area, evacuate from that area.

Nobody should experience the fear of water gradually entering your home. Check a hazard map. You'll feel more anxious if you are isolated.

- You'll feel more comfortable if you know the place.

You'll be more reluctant to evacuate if you do not know the place. You'll be even more at ease if you visit the place in advance.

| Where exactly should you evacuate!?

Once you decide where to evacuate, it is easier to decide the timing for evacuation and prepare emergency goods.



Tips

- Somewhere you can stay casually (such as friend or relative's house)

Consider places outside your home area. (Robust buildings are good candidates.)

- High places close to your home (Also check if there are restrooms.)

Precautions against hot and cold weather shortage are also important if you sleep in your car.

- Public evacuation shelters (designated evacuation shelters [SHITEI HINANSHO] and emergency evacuation sites [KINKYU HINANBASHO])

Check a hazard map and evacuate without hesitation if your home is in a dangerous place.

Create a list of where to evacuate.

■ A friend or relative's house Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
■ Outdoors (such as a tent or car) Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
■ Evacuation shelter (such as a school) Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
■ Comfortable evacuation (such as a hotel) Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
■ Evacuation in case parents are away Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()
Name	Address	Notes, what to bring, etc.
	Phone number	Travel time () minutes by ()

\ Now, decide when to evacuate. /



When

\ Hold a family meeting to prepare for disaster. /

2. Decide when to evacuate.



Tips

- **What does early evacuation mean?**

The meaning depends on each family and where you will evacuate.

Evacuating at night is dangerous. You should evacuate before it gets dark.



- **What is the alert level? The alert level serves as a rough indication of where to evacuate.**

If you have kids, who need help evacuating, evacuate at **alert level 3 [KEIKAI LEVEL SAN]**.

Clearly decide when to start evacuating, an evacuation route, and where to evacuate in different scenarios, such as when a disaster occurs when kids and the elderly are at home alone. Remember that **everybody must evacuate at alert level 4 [KEIKAI LEVEL YON]**.

- **Immediately evacuate if your kids are scared.**

There is nothing more assuring for family members than to be together.

It is important to determine family rules in advance in case someone strays away or an emergency occurs.

- **Encourage each other to evacuate.**

After all, the people around you are the ones that help you when you're in need.

Deepen communication with family members, friends, and neighbors at ordinary times.



Write down your rules. When will your family evacuate?

High



Alert level
[KEIKAI LEVEL GO] **5**

Occurrence of
disaster
or imminent risk

Ensure emergency safety*1

Fatal risk. Immediately
ensure safety.

At alert level 5, safe
evacuation is already
impossible and your life is at
risk.

Do not wait until **alert level 5**
is issued.

~~~~~  
Alert level  
[KEIKAI LEVEL YON] **4**

High  
disaster  
risk

## Order to evacuate\*2 [HINAN SHIJI]

**Everybody**  
must evacuate  
from places in danger.

Make sure that  
**everybody evacuates**  
from places in danger.



**Risk**

Alert level  
[KEIKAI LEVEL SAN] **3**

Disaster  
risk

## The elderly and those who need help should evacuate.\*3 [KOREISHA TO HINAN]

The elderly and those who  
need help should evacuate  
from places in danger.

Those who need time to  
evacuate should evacuate  
from places in danger.

The elderly

The physically  
challenged

Those with children,  
especially infants

Expecting  
mothers etc.



Alert  
level **2**

Weather conditions  
have deteriorated

Heavy rain, flood, or high tide watch  
(Japan Meteorological Agency)  
Go over how you will evacuate.

Alert  
level **1**

Weather conditions  
may deteriorate

Early watch information  
(Japan Meteorological Agency)  
Be ready for disaster.

**Low**

\* 1 Alert level 5 may not be issued because, for example, municipalities cannot always grasp the situation of a disaster.

\* 2 The order to evacuate is issued in the case where a call to evacuate would be issued in the past.

\* 3 At alert level 3, people other than the elderly and those who need help should also start diverging from their daily routine, prepare for evacuation, or voluntarily evacuate if they sense danger.

Source: Cabinet Office (Disaster Management) and Fire and Disaster Management Agency

\ Now, let's think about what to take with you! /



What

\ Hold a family meeting to prepare for disaster. /

### 3. Prepare what you will take with you.

Evacuation supplies recommended by those who experienced the flood

#### For kids

- Favorite snacks and juices
  - Toys (such as games, stuffed animals, and picture books)
  - Medicines (prescribed medicines such as fever reducers or asthma drugs)
- \* Carefully prepare food and medicines if your kids have allergies.

We were able to eat our favorite snacks even when we did not have an appetite.

Our favorite toys were a big comfort in an unfamiliar environment.



I can feel at ease by taking the medicines prescribed by my family doctor if I get sick.

#### Convenient items

- Mobile battery
- Emergency power supply
- Bath towel or blanket
- Lighting (such as a solar-powered lantern)
- Pop-up tent
- Portable toilet and toilet paper
- Wet wipes

An emergency power supply is convenient when you sleep in your car or in case of power failure. You can use it for simple air conditioning, smartphone charging, lighting or other purposes.

Evacuating in the rain is colder than you'd think. A bath towel or blanket is really useful. You can use it as covers, lay on it, or use it as a screen.



You need your smartphone or cell phone for information gathering and communication during evacuation. Prepare a battery as well so that you can use your phone at any time.



#### To prevent crimes or ask for help in an emergency

- Crime prevention buzzer or whistle

Women and children should always carry a crime prevention buzzer or whistle during evacuation and in the evacuation shelter to call for help in an emergency.

#### Keep your gas tank full.

After a disaster, you may get caught in traffic jams at many places or the gas station may be crowded when you want to fuel your car. In addition, you may need air conditioning if you have to sleep in your car.



## Irreplaceable things are important!



If you experience a disaster, memories help support you mentally.

**Keep maternal and child health handbooks and mementos (such as umbilical cords, letters, drawings, report cards, awards, and photos) in as high a place as possible (such as on the 2nd floor).**



### Tips



**Ask your kids what they have that is important to them.**

Kids may value something adults do not expect. Prepare what you will take with you with your kids.

Write down what you will take with you.

- |                                                                              |                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wallet (cash)                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone or smartphone and charger                | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Familiar foods (baby food and milk) and beverages   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes and underwear                               | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toothbrush sets (oral care items)                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facemasks and antiseptic                            | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feminine hygiene products and diapers               | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicines (all medicines you use daily) and glasses | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passbooks, seals, and insurance cards               | <small>These facilitate procedures.</small><br><input type="checkbox"/>                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency contact information                       | <small>Prepare in case your smartphone becomes unusable.</small><br><input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>                                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>                                                                     |

## Websites and apps recommended to get disaster preparedness information

### River water level information Risk Management Water Gauge

It is dangerous to actually go to see a river for yourself.

Remotely check the water level with a live camera or on a website that shows the water level.



iPhone



Android

### NHK news disaster preparedness app

This app provides a lot of useful information including news, weather, disaster information, and rain cloud data map and is very helpful for everyday life as well.



iPhone



Android

### Google Maps

Google Maps not only provides a GPS function, but also information on traffic jams and road closures. Use Google Maps to check your evacuation route. (Internet search is also supported.)

Facebook



Inquiries



### Please support the Kawabe Reconstruction Project ARUKU

Our activities depend on your donations and subsidies. Please support us so that residents in the Kawabe area and Mabi town can recover from the disaster and lead a secure life and so that we can continue to creating opportunities for everyone across Japan to think about disaster preparedness.

Account for donations: Bank Name: Kibi Shinkin Bank Branch Name: Kawabe Branch

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(Kawabe Fukkou Project ARUKU Daihyo MAKIHARA Satomi)

Please let us know your opinions  
on the Disaster Preparedness  
Guide for Parents and Kids.



Photos and experiences

Photographer

Book design

Parents in the Kawabe area and Mabi town

Tomoe Obu (Harenohi Photo Studio)

Tomomi Itaya (Drops)

Created in October 2020 / Partially amended in February 2022