

## Disaster Preparedness in Kumamoto

Japan is prone to many natural disasters such as volcano eruptions, typhoons, snow storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, flash floods and landslides. These disasters can occur anywhere in the world. It's how you prepare for them that makes the difference.

Things to take into consideration when preparing for a natural disaster:

1. Survey the surroundings in and around your home –  
Is your apartment on the top floor of the building? Where are the emergency exits on your floor? Do you live near a major water way? Do you live on a slope or at the base of mountain or hill? Is the drainage system near your home free from blockage? Where is the nearest evacuation center (usually the gym of an elementary, junior high or high school)? What's the quickest and safest route to the evacuation center?
2. Prepare an emergency bag and include the following:
  - Non-perishable food items to last three days (water, instant rice, crackers, tin food, chocolate, protein bars etc.)
  - First Aid Kit - gauze, antiseptic wipes, pain medication, band-aid, soap, tweezers, scissors, safety pins, bandages, thermometer, gloves, cold packs, prescription medicine, face masks, alcohol, etc.
  - Change of clothes for 3 days (include wet wipes, lotion, deodorant, etc.)
  - Toiletries - hand sanitizers, toilet paper, hand towel, personal hygiene products, etc.
  - Bedding – blankets, travel pillow etc.
  - Important documents - passport, copies of resident card, bank book, pension book, copies of insurance card, emergency contact details, money (include small notes and coins for payphones), inkan, medical information, etc.
  - Other – battery powered radio, flashlight, candles, matches, portable gas cooker, pocket knife, trash bags, insect repellent, whistle, extra batteries, etc.
3. Prepare an emergency contact list – include local and international contacts, home and work phone numbers, and addresses, emergency services numbers such as police:110, fire/ambulance: 119, non-emergency police line: 099-254-9110
4. Familiarize yourself with safety precautions to be taken before, during, and after a disaster. Take part in disaster prevention drills at your local fire department and at your schools.

In 2016, Kumamoto experienced its most active season of natural disasters in the last 10 years. A snow storm hit the prefecture in February, a major earthquake in April and the eruption of Mount Aso in October along with many typhoon warnings throughout the year. The following disasters are more common in Kumamoto:

- **Volcano Eruptions** – Kumamoto is home to the active Mount Aso which erupted in the Fall of 2016. In the event of an eruption, stay calm and contact your supervisor. Turn on the TV for evacuation procedures in your area. Grab your emergency bag, helmet, goggles, and face mask if you need to evacuate. Proceed to the evacuation center when instructed or if you are in immediate danger.
- **Typhoon and Heavy Rain** – Japan experiences its rainy season from June to mid-July and the typhoon season begins May and ends in October. You'll be notified of an incoming typhoon, landslide and flash flooding through your school, supervisors, or emergency apps. Typhoons are accompanied by strong winds and lots of rain. It's essential that you secure any property outside

your apartment. These can become missiles in the event of a strong typhoon and can cause property damage and loss of life. Close your storm shutters (if you have them), if not, tape a big X on your windows with duct tape. To avoid flying debris or downed powerlines do not go outside unless it's necessary. Contact your emergency contacts in the event you'll need to leave your home.

- **Earthquakes** – As with the rest of Japan, Kumamoto experiences many earthquakes daily. However, major earthquakes are quite rare. If your phone is registered with your mobile carrier's emergency warning service or an earthquake app, you may receive a 10 second alert to an impending earthquake. To avoid injuries in your apartment secure tall furniture such as shelves and cabinets to the walls and ceiling. During the event, cover your head with a thick towel, pillow or helmet and seek shelter under a sturdy table, desk or stand in a doorway. Wait until the event is over then proceed on foot to the evacuation center, if necessary. Avoid walls, tall buildings, cliffs, and riverbanks. If you have no injuries, join volunteer groups to provide first aid and to assist in rescue operations. If a tsunami warning is issued, the earthquake is strong, or the tremor lasts for a long time and you live in a coastal area, evacuate immediately to higher ground. If you can't get to higher ground within 5-10mins take refuge on the highest floor of a tall building.
- **Snow** – Kumamoto Prefecture experiences very little snow fall during winter if any at all. However, JETs in the Aso region will experience snow fall frequently and sometimes heavily. If a snow storm hits, plan accordingly. Local transportation may be delayed due to icy roads and bad travel conditions. Water pipes have been known to freeze even without snowfall. Have large bottles of water available in this event. Dress appropriately when going outside.

5. Prepare mentally – Stay calm, go over your disaster plan and most of all use common sense.

#### **Emergency Notifications:**

- Hinan junbi – Evacuation Preparation. The lowest evacuation warning. There is no immediate need to evacuate, but residents are encouraged to begin preparations should the need arise.
- Hinan kankoku – Evacuation Recommended. Residents are highly encouraged to evacuate to their nearest evacuation center.
- Hinan shiji – Evacuation Order. Remaining in the area is extremely dangerous and all residents should immediately evacuate to their evacuation center.

#### **Other useful numbers and websites:**

- Sexual Crime Help Line: **0120-834-381**
- Kumamoto Police Interpretation Center (emergency only) Mon-Fri 9:30am – 6:15pm: **0963-810-110 ext. 4764**
- Association of Medical Doctors Abroad - To find a multilingual medical practitioner: **03-5285-8088**
- [www.jma.go.jp/jma/en/Activites/eew.html](http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/en/Activites/eew.html) (English)
- Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Earthquake Survival Manual – [www.seikatubunka.metro.tokyo.jp/index3files/survivalmanual.pdf](http://www.seikatubunka.metro.tokyo.jp/index3files/survivalmanual.pdf)

For more information: go to <http://kumamotojet.com/shin/index.php/living-in-kumamoto/safety/disaster-preparedness/>