

GSP 2024: Disaster Preparedness and Resiliency in Japan

(Alt. Titelvorschlag CS: Preparedness for Environmental Risks in a Resilient Society)

Tentative date: September 15th (arrival) – September 27th (checkout)

Japan is a country renowned for its stunning landscapes, technological advancements, and rich cultural heritage. However, it is also a nation that is no stranger to natural disasters, given its location along the so-called „Pacific Ring of Fire“. From earthquakes and tsunamis to typhoons and volcanic eruptions, Japan faces a wide range of natural calamities. In recent years, North Korean atomic bomb testing and rocket missiles have kept the nation in alert as well. Consequently, disaster preparedness has become an integral part of daily life in Japan. In this GSP, we will delve into the importance of disaster preparedness, including education measures and special efforts geared toward foreigners.

Disaster preparedness in Japan is not merely a government initiative, dedication to readiness is rooted in historical lessons. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the Kobe Earthquake of 1995 and the still recent Great East-Japan Earthquake of 2011 with the ensuing „Threefold catastrophe of Fukushima“ underscored the necessity of disaster preparedness and resilience.

Important key factors are Education and Awareness, Prevention Technology, Infrastructure Resilience, but also Community Management. Due to the surge in international tourism, education for foreigners and multi-language support in case of disasters became important as well. From an early age, Japanese citizens are taught about disaster risks, evacuation procedures, and how to protect themselves during emergencies. Regular drills and educational campaigns are conducted to ensure that every individual knows how to react in case of a disaster. In terms of its technology, Japan has a sophisticated earthquake early warning system in place that can alert people seconds before a tremor strikes, providing them with crucial seconds to take cover or evacuate. Additionally, flood warning systems, tsunami detectors, and volcano monitoring systems are constantly updated to provide timely information to the public.

Also, Japan's infrastructure is designed to withstand the forces of nature. Buildings are constructed with earthquake-resistant materials and techniques. Coastal areas have protective seawalls and evacuation routes, while mountainside communities have measures in place to mitigate landslides. Recognizing its diverse population, Japan has been working on providing disaster information in multiple languages to ensure that foreign residents and tourists can also access crucial information during emergencies. Of course, community engagement is vital: The Japanese government actively encourages community participation in disaster planning and response. Neighbors work together to check on vulnerable members, share resources, and provide support during disasters.

Topics and Research Questions

- How aware are people of disaster?
- How safe is safe? Atomic Disaster and Food Safety
- Landslides and Flood prevention
- Earthquake and Tsunami damage mitigation
- Typhoon
- Early warning systems

Preeducation

Movie-Screening: Souls of Zen. How to cope with Disaster? (Tim Graf, Nanzan U)

Lecture: Being in Japan during the Fukushima Catastrophe – Volunteering (Ulrich Flick, Sendai U)

Lecture: Introduction to Disaster Preparedness – Issues and Solutions (Algis Pacevicus, Chiba U)

Lecture: Insurance against disaster – Options and Costs

Activities during main program:

Visit a shelter facility

Visit to the disaster prevention goods zone; how to pack a shelter bag
Visit to the Chiba Museum for Disaster Prevention
Visit to the „Shakeout Center“
Visit to Fukushima
Visit to a Hospital (Emergency infrastructure)
Learn about crisis and emergency infrastructure in rural and urban areas
Lectures about Scenario analysis – future predictions
Lectures and museum visits about the history of disasters and their prevention
Visit of Firefighters Station and Interview with Firefighters