

# ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Since being verified in December 2019, COVID-19 has become a global pandemic, and the spread of the pandemic has exposed the risks of a global economy dependent on the mobility of people, property, and money across borders.

On April 7, 2020, the national government declared a state of emergency in Tokyo and six other prefectures, according to law, and on April 16, the government extended emergency measures to all prefectures. Furthermore, on May 4, the period for execution of emergency measures was extended to May 31.

With the measures implemented to prevent further spread of infection, such as closure of schools throughout Japan, avoidance of going outside, and self-imposed restriction of entertainment facilities and other types of self-restriction of businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on people's lives and socioeconomics.

Under such circumstances, on July 17, 2020 the national government determined the "Growth Strategy Action Plan," and as a basic principle for coexisting with coronavirus and operating in a post-coronavirus society, the government has recognized the need for designing the image of a sustainable society, including the realization of a decarbonized society and circulating economy, and has determined to conduct investigation into these matters.

The following sections present environmental administration response to COVID-19.

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## 1

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS REGARDING COVID-19 TO DATE

In order to maintain the medical activities that support society, and to continue our daily lives and socioeconomic activities, it is necessary to properly dispose of waste related to COVID-19 and ensure that the waste treatment system within the waste disposal industry is properly maintained. The Ministry of the Environment is putting its full effort into securing the waste treatment system and implementing on-site infection prevention measures, etc.

As measures to prevent the spread of infection in national parks and gardens under the Ministry's jurisdiction, in addition to displaying posters and placing hand sanitizer in rest areas and other

locations in national parks and other facilities for visitors to use, on February 28, 2020 the Ministry formulated a strategy for the opening and closing of park facilities. Later, in accordance with the declaration of a state of emergency, the Ministry closed 67 facilities (visitors centers and others) within national parks.

With regard to operations within the Ministry, also, non-essential and non-urgent operations were reduced or suspended, and the work system was changed to one in which most personnel (other than those who cannot perform their duties without going to the workplace) perform their work from home through telecommuting.

## 2

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE REGARDING COVID-19 EMERGENCY ECONOMIC MEASURES

On April 7, 2020, to protect the lives and livelihoods of the nation's citizens and revitalize the economy, the National government newly established the "Environmental Administration Response Regarding COVID-19 Emergency Economic Measures."

To reduce the risk of large-scale outbreaks occurring through restaurants and other such establishments where an unspecified large number of people may gather, the Ministry of the Environment is providing support for the installation of high-performance ventilation equipment and other equipment designed to reduce loss of heating and cooling, save energy, and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Furthermore, to promote the transition to a sustainable and resilient decarbonized society, the Ministry is supporting the installation of self-consumption solar power generation equipment and storage batteries for businesses attempting to develop domestic production bases and other domestic facilities,

which will contribute to the promotion of decarbonization and disaster prevention. Together with businesses' voluntary efforts against climate change, this support will aid the strengthening of business infrastructure.

In response to COVID-19, as in other countries, the use of telework, online education, and Web conference systems has progressed rapidly in Japan. These changes may well contribute to reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions associated with travel and other activities and will also lead to reformation in ways of working and learning. For these reasons, it is important that these methods be fully utilized even after the COVID-19 pandemic has been overcome.

Utilizing the endeavors and knowledge of environmental administration up to this point, we will move forward with maximum effort to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop a sustainable, decentralized, self-reliant, and strong economic society after the pandemic.