

Chapter 2 Post-earthquake restoration and initiatives for the future

Disposal of disaster waste—essential for restoration

In aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of 2011, disaster waste of unprecedented volume and variety was scattered indiscriminately across an area of enormous scale.

The disposal of these waste materials was largely completed by the end of March 2014, at facilities

within Iwate, Miyagi, and the other prefectures in that area, as well as through the cooperation of many other municipalities and private enterprises. One characteristic of these operations was a significant effort to recycle disaster waste materials wherever possible.

Disposal of disaster waste in 13 prefectures as of March 2014

	Number of prefectures	Number of municipalities	Total volume of disaster waste (x 1,000 tons)	Number of municipalities where disposal is complete	Volume disposed (x 1,000 tons)			
					Recycled	Incinerated	Landfill	Total
Disaster waste	13	239	20,188	231 (97%)	16,062 [82%]	2,384 [12%]	1,232 [6%]	19,679 (97%)
Tsunami deposits	6	36	11,016	32 (89%)	9,990 [99%]	—	114 [1%]	10,104 (92%)

Notes:

1. Progress is indicated as a percentage in the number of municipalities where disposal is complete as well as in the volume disposed columns.

These percentages are simple ratios based on the total number of municipalities and total volume of disaster waste, respectively.

2. The percentages given for the breakdown of volume disposed are based on the total volume disposed.

Source: Ministry of the Environment

Disposal is still in progress in parts of Fukushima Prefecture. There, measures implemented include detailed management of disaster waste, and every effort to expedite disposal is made in coordination with local municipalities, with support including the provision of disposal services by national government.

At some point in the future, a major seismic event centered in the Nankai Trough or in close proximity to metropolitan Tokyo could cause extensive damage, including tsunami damage, severe enough to generate an unprecedented volume of debris and to cripple the infrastructure of metropolitan Tokyo.

In October 2013, the disaster waste measures committee began to consider a comprehensive approach to enhancing the resiliency of the current system for waste disposal. In addition to studying a systematic approach to disposal of the volume of debris generated by a major earthquake, the committee also addressed issues related to policies for enhancing the present organization and measures for responding to major natural disasters, including regional coordination among national and municipal governments as well as private enterprise to help develop an organization for waste disposal over a wide-area.