

Residents who are eager to return to their original residences in areas other than the Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Base Areas in Restricted Areas have long been forced to live as refugees and local governments have strongly requested that the national government clarify its policy on the lifting of evacuation orders as early as possible. In consideration of such circumstances, in August 2021, the national government formulated a policy to grasp residents' intention individually and carefully and promote decontamination of areas necessary for returnees in order to enable residents who are eager to return to their original residences to do so during the 2020s (the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters and the Reconstruction Promotion Council). In order to achieve this policy, the national government amended the Act on Special Measures for the Reconstruction and Revitalization of Fukushima in June 2023, under which a system was created to enable mayors of the municipalities containing Specified Areas under Evacuation Orders to establish Specified Living Areas for Returnees (SLAR) outside the Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Base Areas. In the SLAR, each municipality aims to achieve return of residents through lifting of evacuation orders and to assist returnees' reconstruction of livelihoods.

Under this system, Okuma Town and Futaba Town obtained approval from the Prime Minister for their Reconstruction and Revitalization Plans for the Specified Living Areas for Returnees in September 2023 and Namie Town obtained the same in January 2024. Decontamination, infrastructure development, and other initiatives toward the lifting of evacuation orders will be promoted based on these plans. (Approval of the plans: as of the end of January 2024)

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