

Japan 1,000 days after March 2011 disaster: still 278,000 evacuees

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Temp housing occupancy still runs high 1,000 days after 3/11 quake

SENDAI (Kyodo) — Makeshift housing units set up after the March 11, 2011 quake and tsunami was still marking an occupancy rate of over 80 percent in the three hardest-hit prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima as the 1,000th day passed Dec. 4 after the disaster, prefectural officials said.

The result — much higher than the comparable period after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995 — is believed to stem from slow progress in clearing highland to construct homes as well as building public housing for disaster victims, suggesting that residents would not be able to leave makeshift units anytime soon.

At the end of October, occupancy stood at 86.7 percent in the three Pacific coast prefectures, just over two years and seven months after the March 11, 2011 quake and tsunami, compared with 58.4 percent at the same timeframe after the Hanshin quake.

Iwate had 12,017 homes, or 86 percent, occupied, while in Miyagi, 19,764 houses, or 89.5 percent, had residents. Fukushima's occupancy rate was 83.7 percent, or 14,065 full units.

An official in charge of temporary housing in Iwate said, "We haven't been making progress in building public housing for disaster victims and acquiring land for projects to relocate entire communities."

Known for a saw-tooth coastline, Iwate has limited flat land near the sea, making it difficult to secure highland for new housing.

An official at Fukushima, where the post-quake nuclear meltdown at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power plant complicated the situation, said, "An increasing number of people who moved out and took shelters outside the prefecture are returning to Fukushima and settling in temporary housing."

Although temporary housing was closed down around five years after the Hanshin quake, no prospects appear in sight yet for frustrated residents who moved into makeshift homes after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Iwate Prefecture started polling residents to see how long temporary housing has to be maintained in 12 coastal towns and villages. An official said, "There is a strong likelihood that it may take five years or more after the quake to see all occupants move out."

In some areas in Miyagi Prefecture, officials are certain that residents would have to put up with makeshift housing for at least four years because of slow progress in getting highland areas ready for new housing.

Iwate and Miyagi have stretched the accommodation period in temporary housing to four years and

Fukushima until March 2015. But they may well have to re-extend the period.

Kyodo News, December 4, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131204p2g00m0dm017000c.html>

278,000 evacuees remain nearly 1,000 days after March 2011 disaster

TOKYO (Kyodo) — As many as 278,000 people remained evacuees Nov. 14 as a result of the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, the Reconstruction Agency said Wednesday, 1,000 days after the disaster.

The number marked a fall from a peak of about 470,000.

The evacuees include 49,554 who have left Fukushima Prefecture, where the disaster caused a serious nuclear crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power plant, the agency said.

The earthquake-tsunami disaster killed 15,883 people and left 2,651 others unaccounted for as of Nov. 8. Search for the missing still continues in the tsunami-hit coastal zones.

An additional 2,688 deaths, including those from evacuation-caused health deterioration and suicides, were related to the disaster by the end of March this year.

Kyodo News, December 5, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131205p2g00m0dm024000c.html>
