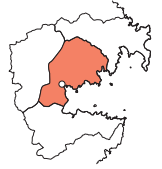


SOS! Pleas for Help. Shizugawa Public Hospital



▲ March 12, a Self-Defense Forces helicopter landed on the hospital roof and began rescuing patients.

Over 300 people were stranded at the Shizugawa Public Hospital. In a conference room on the fifth floor of the new building, which had barely escaped flooding, patients, staff, and local residents endured the fear of repeated tsunamis and aftershocks. Telephones were out of service, cell phone towers and other communications equipment had been destroyed by the tsunami. The bridges along the coast had been completely destroyed, resulting in the town becoming an isolated land.

Takaaki Yokoyama, the chief secretary of Shizugawa Public Hospital at the time, used a satellite phone designed for emergency use to make numerous calls to fire stations and prefectural offices throughout

the prefecture but phone lines were either busy or disconnected. A hospital staff member gave Yokoyama the phone number of an acquaintance outside of the prefecture who he could call and request help. The call eventually connected with a distant medical association. They asked about the situation in Minamisanriku, but satellite phone's batteries died around 19:00. All hope for assistance was gone.

In the event of major disasters, it is important have an emergency network in distant areas to facilitate rescue requests.



▲ The area around Shizugawa Public Hospital, on March 18