



▲ With the tsunami warning still in effect, evacuees who had spent the night in fear of additional tsunami waves, aftershocks, and cold temperatures escaped from the Takano Hall building and headed for higher ground.

Takano Hall was a popular event space for local residents. On March 11, 2011, it was hosting an entertainment event presented by the Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council.

About 300 elderly people were in the building performing songs and dances that they had been practicing for a long time. The earthquake struck during the closing ceremony.

A four-story building, Takano Hall was a designated tsunami evacuation center. When the tsunami warning was issued, the building started to fill with evacuees from the immediate area.

About 10 staff from Takano Hall and the Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council worked to direct them farther up the building. The water level was rising quickly, and when the fire door leading to the roof was closed, the last staff member to reach the roof was completely wet. They had made it in the nick of time. The roof was surrounded by muddy water, which covered the evacuees' feet as the water level rose even farther.

The 327 people who had evacuated to Takano Hall were forced to stand up throughout the entire night, facing a series of terrifying tsunami waves and aftershocks.

"It's 1 o'clock. Are you all OK? Holding up OK?" "Are you still with us?"

With words such as these to boost each other's spirits, they summoned up the strength to stay alive.

The next morning, the tsunami warning was still in effect; however, those who were able to walk made their way downstairs and exited the building. At huge personal risk, they moved to shelters on high ground. All 327 people who had evacuated to Takano Hall survived the disaster.



▲ Takano Hall (right)