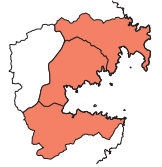


Build Toilets! At Every Evacuation Center



▲ The first task was the construction of makeshift toilets (foreground right).
The construction took 2 days (toilets with blue sheets).

Photo courtesy of Minamisanriku Social Welfare Council

In Minamisanriku, about 10,000 residents had evacuated and 60% of the town's buildings had been destroyed by the tsunami. While people are able to endure hunger, not being able to relieve oneself is a different matter. Above all else, it was important to work quickly to set up toilet facilities.

The flush toilets at large evacuation sites, such as sports facilities, elementary schools, and junior high schools, were not able to be used, as their tanks quickly ran out of water. Sites that had swimming pools or reservoirs nearby were able to use these to source water.

However, the large number of people living in the evacuation centers necessitated the construction of makeshift toilets outside buildings. Evacuees gathered materials, dug holes, and built enclosures themselves. Some sites made Western-style toilet seats from wood, while others used large plastic fishing baskets to create toilet seats by turning the basket upside down and drilling a hole in the top. At another evacuation site, the manhole cover was removed from a septic tank, a portable toilet salvaged from the debris was secured on top, and with the addition of a toilet seat, a Western-style toilet was created. These were creative solutions for elderly people with knee problems and children who had never used Japanese-style toilets.

In local meeting halls that were being used as evacuation centers, toilets were often not the flush type, so they were not affected by the disruption to the water supply.

At all evacuation sites, makeshift toilets were built by evacuee carpenters or other people with experience in civil engineering, and evacuees cooperatively handled the management and maintenance of toilets.