

# InTouch Report

No. 2

## Publisher

InTouch

Address: 4-12 Amijima-cho, Miyakojima-ku,  
Osaka-shi 534-0026

E-mail: [intouch@jbs.or.jp](mailto:intouch@jbs.or.jp)

URL: <http://www.jbs.or.jp>

## Editors:

Toshinobu Kawagoe, Naoki Kaneda, Daigo Higashi,  
Hamish Smith

Support Network for Visually Impaired Victims of the Eastern Japan's Massive Earthquake InTouch

April 1, 2011

## The first survey report: The condition of the visually impaired in Miyako, Iwate Prefecture after the disaster



(Miyako is one of the most damaged cities in Iwate Prefecture. Many people lost their lives.)

Over a period of four days beginning on March 20, InTouch sent the first survey team (Toshinobu Kawagoe, Naoki Kaneda) to Miyako, Iwate Prefecture. The team surveyed the condition of the visually impaired in the city after the disaster, and considered what supports would be needed.

The team entered Morioka through Akita Prefecture on the 20th. In the afternoon, it surveyed the state of all areas within Iwate Prefecture, especially Miyako, at Iwate Prefectural Center for the Visually and Hearing Impaired, The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired, Iwate Prefecture Government and The Osaka and Wakayama Prefectural Task Force.

On the 21st, the team went to Miyako by bus. It stopped near the train station. Although the electricity and phones didn't work around the station, the damage looked minor. However, at the further east of the station (toward the coastline), it was a totally different sight, now a widening scene of disaster. Cars, boats and destroyed homes formed mountains of rubble. They made their way on foot down the hazardous road, where dust flew through the air along with a foul stench, to a refuge shelter.

The heavy luggage dug into their shoulders. The Self-Defense Force personnel risked their own safety to secure the road. Except for those working for the reconstruction operation, there were few people. While walking toward a refuge shelter, "Thanks for a job well done" was called out back and forth to those they met along the way, all the while fighting back the tears.

According to the Miyako City Hall, the death toll from the city sat at 362, with a further 1,301 unaccounted for. The number of evacuees was 4,641 as of March 31.

The number of the visually impaired residing in Miyako was 178 (Statistics from the Department of Health and Welfare, Iwate Prefecture Government, as of March 31, 2010). Among them, according to the InTouch survey, eleven were confirmed safe.

The following data was compiled by InTouch with help from The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired, Miyako City Council of Social Welfare and Iwate Prefectural Center for the Visually and Hearing Impaired.

**Data about the disabled**

Number of the visually impaired in Iwate Prefecture	4,591
Of those; Members of the Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired	320
Of those; Estimated number of victims (living in the affected areas)	74
Of those; Number of persons confirmed safe	50 (67%)
Number of the visually impaired in Miyako	178
Of those; 8 members and 3 non-members were confirmed safe (6%)	

**Data about visually impaired victims in the Iwate Prefecture coastline**

Kuji	3 members	3 confirmed safe
Miyako	12 members	8 confirmed safe
Kamaishi	28 members (including 3 from Otsuchi)	20 confirmed safe
Ofunato	30 members (including 8 from Rikuzentakata)	19 confirmed safe
Other areas	1 member	0 confirmed safe
Amount	74 members	50 confirmed safe (67%)
Non-members (graduates from the blind school and others)		17 confirmed safe
Total number of victims confirmed safe		67

**Miyako lost the functionality of its administration**

The first and second floors of the Miyako City Hall were unusable due to the damage from the Tsunami. The electricity and the Internet were down. As the administrative functionality was impaired, there was nearly nothing that the Miyako City Hall could do. It was a desperate situation. On March 26, the electricity was restored and the computers also resumed working.



The Miyako City Hall. A boat beached on the site.

**InTouch Support Network**

JBS (Japan Broadcasting Service for Persons with Visual Impairment )  
 The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired  
 My Life Station Association  
 Kobe Eyelight Association  
 First Wind Association  
 Rokusei  
 Kanefuji Industries Corporation  
 URO Electronics Ind. Co., Ltd.  
 \*We have been exchanging information with other volunteer organizations and, through the network, we are aiming to provide effective assistance and support.

東日本大震災  
 視覚障害被災者 支援ネットワーク  
**インタッチ**  
 InTouch Network  
 For Supporting People with Visual Impairment  
 in the Disaster Areas  
 of the Eastern Japan's Massive Earthquake



The InTouch Office in the Affected Area at The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired.



The Miyako City Hall. The first and second floors were damaged. The electricity and the Internet were out.



A shopping avenue near Miyako Station was also severely damaged. The footpath was dangerous and inaccessible to the disabled and the elderly.



The Self-Defense Force personnel risked their own safety to secure the road.



A InTouch member advancing while looking over some dangerous rubble.



A visually impaired victim (center) and his mother at a refuge shelter.



InTouch representative, Toshinobu Kawagoe.



InTouch member, Naoki Kaneda.



Temporary toilets at a refuge shelter. It's away from the living area and hugely inconvenient for the visually impaired and the elderly.