

InTouch Report

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InTouch

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

April 26, 2011

Report from the second InTouch survey Condition of the visually impaired and Radio Iwate Prefecture – Hanamaki, Morioka, Miyako, Kamaishi, Ofunato



The members of the second survey team, Toshihiro Ogisaka (middle left) and Naoki Kaneda (middle right) and other InTouch members.

InTouch dispatched the second survey team (Naoki Kaneda and Toshihiro Ogisaka) from April 5 to April 9. Support efforts and safety confirmation were carried out in Hanamaki, Morioka, Miyako, Kamaishi and Ofunato. InTouch (JBS) decided to shift from support efforts to “spreading the word.” With the radio stations in the disaster area, we searched for ways to cooperate.

In Miyako, where we visited again, there were deep scars leftover from the earthquake and tsunami. However, The Self-Defense Force and the fire brigade had made some progress with their restoration efforts. We went around the refuge shelters and confirmed the safety of visually impaired victims. We went to see the mother of a visually impaired victim who we interviewed last time and she was very pleased when we handed the first survey report to her.

We entered Kamaishi in a rental car, which we could not have used due to a shortage of gasoline last time. There were some refuge shelters with poor sanitary conditions. Visually impaired victims staying at an unofficial refuge shelter worried if they would have access to food even for the next day because such a shelter was out of list for relief supplies.

The damage in Ofunato was extensive. Even then we saw many mountains of rubble. It seemed that restoration efforts had not yet begun. Because of the big aftershock on the night of the 7th, the power was still out. The Self-Defense Force had installed the portable bath houses. However, according to the visually impaired victims that we interviewed, it seemed that the limited bathing time and the lack of handrails made the baths difficult to use for the visually impaired and the elderly. InTouch reported this to the Department of Health and Welfare, Iwate Prefecture. Following that, the Department contacted some cities and arrangements were made to make it easier for the visually impaired to use the bathing facilities.

We interviewed three visually impaired victims this time and confirmed the safety of seven. We handed out the white canes and talking thermometers to them.



This visually impaired brother and sister said they were worried if food would be supplied for tomorrow.



This visually impaired victim said that the portable baths were difficult to use for the disabled and the elderly.

Visiting Refuge Shelters

April 6 - Miyako

Kuwagasaki Elementary School, Miyako Elementary School, Yamaguchi Elementary School and Atago Elementary School

*There was one more person confirmed safe.

April 7 - Kamaishi

The Welfare Center for Physically Handicapped People, Kamaishi Elementary School, Senjuin Temple, The former gym of Daiichi Junior High School, Nozomi Hospital, Kamaishi Bed and Breakfast and Otadakoe Assembly Hall

*There were two more persons confirmed safe.

April 8 - Ofunato

Rias Hall, Sakari Elementary School and Ofunato District Community Hall

*There were four more persons confirmed safe.

Visiting Facilities

April 5 - Hanamaki, Morioka

FM One / A conference on cooperative broadcasting
The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired / Exchanging information
Iwate Prefecture Government / Collecting information

April 6 - Miyako

Miyako Council of Social Welfare / Collecting information
Miyako City Hall / Collecting information
Miyako Disaster FM / A conference on cooperative broadcasting

April 7 - Kamaishi

The Osaka City on site headquarters / Collecting information

April 8 - Ofunato

Ofunato Disaster FM / A conference on cooperative broadcasting

April 9 - Morioka

Iwate Prefecture Government / Presenting survey results
The Osaka and Wakayama Prefectural Task Force / Collecting information
The Iwate Welfare Association for the Visually Impaired / Presenting survey results.

JBS began spreading the word in cooperation with the radio stations in the disaster area.

The unprecedented level of damage has brought about the realization that Japan must "build a new country." Those who have suffered from the disaster must now fight their way down a long road of suffering and hardship. We, far from the disaster area, hope that we could keep the disaster and suffering people in mind, and continue to support the victims.

We say this because the distance between those who have learned of the damage through the television or newspapers and those who are victims of the disaster itself is immense. How are we, InTouch (JBS), going to continue to give our support? Now, after surveying the disaster area, standing there and being at a loss for words, we determined that we should spread the word.

In great haste we started the conference for the cooperation with "Miyako Disaster FM" and reached an agreement with Satoshi Ito who is the chairman of the station.

In addition, the second survey team, along with safety confirmations, took the task of promoting cooperation with other radio stations. In the end we came to an agreement with three different FM radio stations in the disaster area.

JBS started to broadcast the Miyako Disaster FM program on April 25. We plan to broadcast the programs of other two stations.

FM radio stations in the disaster area

Miyako Disaster FM (Miyako)

This station started its broadcasts straight after the earthquake struck. It is also broadcasting through Ustream. JBS started to broadcast its program on April 25.



Miyako Disaster FM. Its posters could be seen in many refuge shelters and public facilities.

FM One (Hanamaki)

It has returned to their original broadcasting but, due to the requests of their listeners, has continued to also broadcast some disaster-related news.



Ofunato Disaster FM (Ofunato)

The disaster victims are acting as the radio announcers. The studio has been set up in the city hall. It also has the frequency for Rikuzentakata and broadcasts a disaster-related newsletter which is published daily.



In the Media

Mainichi Shimibun Newspaper

The article about activities and surveys of InTouch was printed in the morning edition on April 3.
<http://mainichi.jp/select/weathernews/20110311/archive/news/2011/04/02/20110403k0000m040044000c.html>

YouTube

You can watch the photographic reports with narration and subtitle. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvrtHPHYNhE>

Twitter

Tweeting the latest Intouch information and other disaster-related news. <http://twitter.com/#!/intouchJBS>

The JBS Homepage

Each "InTouch Report" has been uploaded on the JBS homepage. <http://www.jbs.or.jp>

NHK

On March 25, InTouch representative Toshinobu Kawagoe spoke about the first survey tour in Iwate and visually impaired victims on the program "Kirattoikiru," which introduces the cultural activities of the disabled.



InTouch representative Toshinobu Kawagoe speaking about the methods of support for visually impaired victims in times of disaster. (NHK Osaka)

Support from the visual impairment society, getting started.

Focusing on disaster areas where telephone services restored in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, Japan Braille Library and other organizations are getting safety confirmation by using the member lists.

Furthermore, the support team organized by National Committee of Welfare for The Blind in Japan gave great results. The National Committee of Welfare for The Blind in Japan is made up by the three main bodies in Japan's visual impairment society. In other words, it means that the big support efforts have started.

It was the same during the Hanshin earthquake disaster. In the big disaster, administrations such as prefectures and cities lose their functionality. Wisdom and power from private organizations are needed and useful. In this disaster, those who are connected to welfare for the visually impaired have come together and started to put all their effort into support. We hope the support team would help a lot of visually impaired victims.



Compared to last time, a lot of the rubble had been cleared away but damage could still be seen.(Miyako)



There were many cars scattered around.(Kamaishi)



The Center in Kamaishi.



The beached tanker.(Kamaishi)



Donated bicycles sent from Osaka. (Kamaishi)



Most of the houses were destroyed. (Ofunato)



A car sitting on the roof of a warehouse. (Ofunato)



A refuge shelter - Ofunato District Community Hall.



Is this clock telling us the time when it was swallowed up?