

## When an earthquake happens

### 1. Some information about earthquakes.

Japan is a land where earthquakes happen frequently. A powerful earthquake with an intensity level of 7 hit the Chuetsu Region of Niigata Prefecture in October, 2004. That was the beginning of a series of powerful quakes that caused damage and suffering to many people, including international residents.

Earthquakes occur due to dislocations of underground plates or faults. It is said that 15% of earthquakes across the world happen within Japan or its vicinity. Tracing back the history of earthquakes over the past 100 years, those that caused casualties hit the Japanese Archipelago every 18 months on average. Unfortunately, the occurrence of earthquakes cannot be precisely predicted as of now.

### 4. Seeking shelter.

If earthquakes with intensity levels of over 5+ hit Nagaoka, the city will immediately set up Disaster Relief Headquarters. If it is judged that residents of certain areas must evacuate, an "Evacuation Order" will be issued and public evacuation facilities will be opened.

During an emergency, evacuation shelters are set up at schools or community centers in your neighborhood. You are advised to check the location of your local facilities well in advance.

Some emergency food, beverages, health care, and information are provided at every evacuation facility. You can also stay there overnight. Irrespective of nationality, everyone is welcome to any evacuation facility.

### 7. Information Sources.

The City of Nagaoka provides disaster information through TV, radio broadcasts or the city's Web site. Detailed local information will also be available through FM radio broadcast or the cell phone site listed below.

Follow reliable information and act properly. If you are worried about anything, feel free to contact the staff at the Nagaoka International Affairs Center, *Chikyu Hiroba* or the International Affairs Division of the Nagaoka City Office.

FM Nagaoka: 80.7MHz  
Cell Phone Site: [jm@jmdp.jp](mailto:jm@jmdp.jp)  
Nagaoka International Affairs Center: 0258-39-2714  
Nagaoka City Office: 0258-35-1122  
Emergency Message Phone Number: 171

### 2. How to protect yourself from earthquakes.

Depending on the different levels of intensity, things may fall off shelves. When you see things fall or break, you may be frightened. It is advisable to remain calm and seek safety by putting yourself under a table or protecting your head from falling objects.

### 3. Be sure to put out open flames.

When an earthquake occurs, fires are likely to break out due to gas leakage or the flames of space heaters. As soon as the tremors stop and before evacuating, immediately put out any open flames; shut the main stopcocks of gas appliances; pull out the plugs of electrical appliances; and shut off circuit breakers.

### 5. Getting to evacuation facilities.

You are advised to walk to evacuation facilities. Getting to an evacuation facility in your car may cause traffic jams or accidents.

Things to be taken with you should be kept to a minimum, limited to some emergency personal effects, passports, religious items, etc.

Dress casually to move easily. If you are far away from any available facilities or the facilities are closed, evacuate to a safe and open area where no hazardous objects may fall on you.

### 6. Places considered to be hazardous during earthquakes.

#### Temples and Shrines

There are breakable gates and statues.

#### High Buildings

Exterior walls, billboards, and glass pieces may fall on you.

#### Block Walls around Houses

Block walls are vulnerable to earthquakes.

#### Sea Coasts

Tsunami, high tidal waves, may hit sea coasts.

Please be alert to tsunami information on TV or radio.

#### Mountain Foot Areas

Mud slides or land slides may occur in steep hillside areas.

### 8. What you can do in advance.

(1) You are advised to participate in local events where you can have opportunities to get acquainted with the people of your neighborhood. During disasters, communication and cooperation with local residents are essential. To make your community a safe place based on good relationships with your neighbors is very important.

(2) You are advised to participate in disaster prevention drills. Whether you have participated in such a drill or not makes a big difference on how to handle emergency situations.

(3) You are advised to discuss with your family members how to get to an evacuation facility and how to get in touch with each other.

(4) You are advised to prevent your household furniture from falling.

(5) You are advised to keep emergency items handy. The minimum necessary items may include emergency food, important documents such as your passport, savings account books, etc., a radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, a lighter, a knife, gloves, etc.

Families with little children or the elderly are advised to prepare diapers, formula, etc., and keep them handy.

### 9. Other disasters

In addition to earthquakes, other disasters include floods and snow damage. Between June and September we usually have torrential rainfalls with rapid and heavy precipitation, causing rivers to overflow or riverbanks to break. During heavy rainfalls, it is advisable to stay away from rivers.

Snow damage is caused by heavy snowfalls. Some people have lost their lives due to avalanches or during snow removal operations. You are advised to pay attention to disaster related information. If you have any worries or questions, feel free to contact the Nagaoka International Affairs Center, *Chikyu Hiroba*.