

# July 2020 Torrential Rain Disaster Damage Survey

## -- Limitations of the System

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After the COVID-19 declaration of a state of emergency was lifted in Hyogo Prefecture on June 20, 2021, I visited Hitoyoshi city and Kuma district in Kumamoto Prefecture during this period, which also coincided with the first anniversary of the July 2020 torrential rain disaster. In the city, more empty lots that had been cleared of dismantled homes were becoming noticeable. Simultaneously, there were many structures that were still in the same condition as a year ago as they wait their turn to be dismantled using public funds. Yet the view of some new houses nearby highlighted the disparities between those who could reconstruct their homes quickly and those who were still unsettled about their unforeseeable futures while remaining in temporary housing. July 2021

Hitoyoshi City has formulated a reconstruction plan and has been formulating a "reconstruction town development plan" by holding regional advisory meetings once or twice a month in areas that suffered particularly significant damage. With the aim of creating a resident-led plan, I would like to focus on the future planning process and the implementation of the plan.

Nevertheless, I heard various anxieties and dissatisfactions regarding reconstruction as I spoke with the victims of this disaster. One of them related their dissatisfaction with the first aid repair system for housing.

The first aid repair system for housing is as follows.

[Standard]

- ① Households affected by major semi-destruction or semi-destruction: within 595,000 yen
- ② Households affected by quasi-semi-destruction: 300,000 yen or less

[Subjects]

- A. Residents of homes damaged in major, semi-destruction, or quasi-semi-destruction who cannot repair their homes by themselves.
- B. Residents of homes that are unlivable without work due to damage to an essential part of the house for daily living.
- C. Residents of homes that can be repaired to livability by first aid repair. \*Residents with total destruction are generally not subject to first aid repair, but they may be included if the home can be made livable by first aid repair. \*If neither the owner nor renter has the financial capacity to perform repairs of the rental property for the resident to secure a place to live, the damaged property can be repaired by first aid repair with the consent of the owner. (Source: Kumamoto Bar Association website.)



▲Konose, Kuma district,  
Kumamoto, where many empty  
lots are becoming noticeable.

Houses affected by quasi-semi-destruction (partial destruction) were also included in the scope since typhoon no. 15 in 2019. Previously, residents could not relocate to temporary housing if they had their homes repaired with first-aid repair.

However, rules were relaxed for the sake of housing security since the July 2020 torrential rains pursuant to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications recommendations related to government evaluation, monitoring, and support for the reconstruction of the lives of the affected people so that residents could live in temporary housing while waiting to have their homes fixed by first aid repair. One of the general criteria of the recommendations for first aid repair, namely completion within 1 month, was extended in special circumstances because it was unrealistic. This extension was intended to avoid forcing disaster victims to "choose between temporary or first aid repair under post-disaster psychological stress." Rules related to temporary housing were relaxed for this purpose; however, the period of residence in temporary housing has been limited to 6 months (excluding cases recognized

to have unavoidable circumstances). First, as mentioned in the above recommendations, first aid repairs are rarely completed in 1 month. In the case of Hitoyoshi city, the date of occupation of the earliest constructed temporary housing was August 22. Elderly people and others with special needs were allowed to move into these homes with priority. Other temporary housing developments were gradually occupied starting in September, and the latest occupants moved in in December. In other words, 3 or 4 months had already passed since the disaster, even for those who were able to move in in October and November. Victims were only left with 3 or 4 more remaining months. (After consulting with the government, residents were allowed to live in temporary housing for 8 months, until the end of March.) Moving into post-disaster public-funded rental accommodation was also an option when no construction-type temporary housing was available. However, although it may be possible to repair some partial destruction, it is unlikely that a 595,000 yen subsidy would cover all the costs of repairing homes devastated by major semi-destruction or semi-destruction. Repairs of only a limited number of areas can be afforded by the subsidy; thus, all additional repairs would have to be paid at their own expense. That is, victims who receive the subsidy are required to complete the repairs in the period, and must be able to afford the increasing worker costs for the costs of large-scale repairs. Many victims said that they gave up on receiving the 595,000 yen subsidy to keep living in temporary housing. Another victim explained that he wished to stay in temporary housing for a while because of health problems, but had to leave in 6 months. It would be ideal for individuals to be able to make the best housing-related decision for their circumstances, and the current 6 months (8 months in the present case) is too short to allow victims to make well thought-out decisions about their own homes. The survey thus revealed many limitations of the system.

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