

【Lessons learned from the heavy rain disaster】

Hello, I'm Masao Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

Due to the severe rain storm that had been falling from July 5th to 7th, emergency warning was issued for the first time in Okayama Prefecture. Dike break of the first-class rivers, flood damage by inland waters, collapse of road shoulders, and landslide were happened one after another.

Especially, more than 7,600 houses were damaged by inundation both under and above floor level and many people are still living in the evacuation shelters. Many lessons were learnt by the unprecedented disaster although Okayama is believed to have less natural disasters.

First thing is the importance of steady disaster prevention measures.

As a result of the steady efforts to raise levee and its maintenance of Hyakken-gawa River and Sasagase-gawa River that are the drainage channels of Asahi-gawa River, a catastrophe was prevented in the areas where the measures had been done with no river dike or flooding.

However, the dike break was happened at the rivers which weren't taken enough measures and a wide range of flooding was happened by the Sasagase-gawa River which has less functional drainage. We learned the importance of the disaster measures again and made up our mind to take the effective disaster measures promptly from now on.

Second thing is the importance of “circle of people”.

I have been concentrated on the overall direction of command right after the disaster happened but I visited the affected areas for 5 consecutive days at the beginning of next week.

I was very shocked by seeing the damage with my own eyes. However, at the same time I was deeply impressed with the volunteers and the people in the affected area were working together as one in the devastating situation.

Not to mention the national government, prefecture, and self-defense force, city officials who were affected responded to the disaster day and night. I sincerely would like to send my deepest appreciation.

This is the first time for Okayama City to be affected by this kind of huge disaster in Heisei period and it gave us many assignments including the city’s response.

It is important that we need to take measures to protect people and their living from the same kind of disaster as we studying each lesson we have learnt.

About 2 weeks have passed from the disaster. With the help of many volunteers, neighbors and private companies, all-Okayama City have been helping restore the affected area. I feel that people are recovering their daily life in small steps.

All the city staff will make the best effort in order to reconstruct Okayama City from this unprecedented disaster as soon as possible and make Okayama City strong against disasters, safe and secure.