

Mayor's E-newsletter from the City of Okayama
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3 Ways in Life

Hello Citizens, this is Mayor OMORI Masao.

People often say, "Life has three ways: the way that goes up, the way that goes down and "No way! It can't be." Since March 2020 when the novel coronavirus infections started to spread on a global scale, the entire human race has faced an unprecedented crisis said to occur once every century. We are exactly in the midst of "No way!" situation. Individuals, communities and countries alike have struggled to find measures against the virus under unpredictable circumstances.

I believe a calm response is required precisely because of this situation. Based on expert opinions, I have addressed the challenge, balancing infection preventative measures and socio-economic activities.

We've been dealing with this virus for over 6 months now. And it is becoming gradually clear that most infections are transmitted through droplets and so on. I am of the opinion that each one of us should understand this virus infection fully, stay and act calm without excessive fear.

Meanwhile, we have just announced the September supplementary budget bill to contain the novel coronavirus infections. I would like to clarify, in particular, our plans to expand the number of PCR tests to be conducted and to help resume cultural and artistic activities.

First of all, the scope of PCR testing will be significantly expanded from two perspectives.

We will establish a system whereby those in essential services and sectors can take PCR tests readily; the providers of medical, nursing, welfare, educational and child-care facilities, etc. shall direct their employees to visit medical institutions for the purpose of receiving PCR tests.

Furthermore, a wider scope of PCR testing will be considered, in case of a cluster infection or a possible cluster infection. In other words, PCR tests will

be conducted on people concerned as deemed necessary without waiting for the results of the tests already done on those who have been in contact with infected persons: family members of those who came in contact with infected persons, etc. as a good example of “people concerned.”

Through these efforts, we are establishing a system which enables people concerned who might be driving the spread of coronavirus to take PCR tests easily. As of August 31, 2020, a total of over 3,500 people underwent the tests. Approximately 20,000 people are assumed to be tested in 6 months from October.

As to our second plan, we will extend detailed assistance for citizen-initiated activities and provide a one-stop general consultation service in order to help resume cultural and artistic activities.

Currently, the following three items are on our list to support such activities;

1) “Assistance in Resuming Cultural and Artistic Activities”

Related efforts to these activities will be subsidized:

- Regularly-scheduled theater and dance performances by cultural organizations at Okayama Civic Hall
- High school brass band recitals in the halls
- Traditional culture presentations such as flower arrangement exhibitions, tea ceremonies, *Go* or *Shogi* tournaments, etc. at community centers.

2) “Assistance in Securing Presentation Venues”

We will subsidize venue rental fees or related costs charged by Okayama Civic Hall or Okayama Symphony Hall.

3) “Compensating for Cancellation Fees, etc.”

The City of Okayama will shoulder required expenses such as leaflet printing, etc. when scheduled activities are canceled.

We will continue to take the necessary measures in a timely manner to balance the efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 and to resume socio-economic activities.