

Overview of the 2025 White Paper on Fire Service

Materials created by the Fire and Disaster Management Agency were translated by the International Fire Service Information Center

**The Fire and Disaster Management Agency
(FDMA)**

Contents

Special Feature

- 1 Response to Large-Scale Wildfires
- 2 Response to Recent Large-Scale Disasters
- 3 Enhancement and Strengthening of the Emergency Fire Response Teams
- 4 Ensuring and Strengthening the ambulance service framework, including nationwide deployment of My Number Emergency Care
- 5 Strengthening Community Disaster Prevention Capacity with the volunteer fire corps as its core
- 6 Promotion of Civil Protection Measures
- 7 Promotion of DX and New Technologies in the Fire Service Field

Topic

- 1 Establishing wildfire advisories and warnings and ensuring their timely issuance Initiatives for promoting women's participation in firefighting
- 2 Efforts to promote women's participation in the fire service
- 3 Status of ambulance transports due to heat stroke and initiatives for prevention awareness
- 4 Fire safety measures tailored to the characteristics of simplified sauna facilities
- 5 AI Use at self-service gasoline stations
- 6 Promotion of international cooperation and international exchange

Elementary Item

Fire Prevention:	Number of Fire Incidents/Number of Fatalities from Fires
Fire Prevention:	Number of Residential Fire Incidents/Fatalities, Residential Fire Alarm Installation Status
Ambulance System:	Status of Ambulance Service Operations
Firefighting System:	Fire Defense Organization

Status of Major Wildfires in 2025

■ Response to the wildfire in Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture

- The fire spread rapidly due to historically low precipitation leading up to the outbreak, combined with dry conditions, strong winds, and other conditions in the period immediately before and after the outbreak, together with terrain-related factors. As a wildfire in Japan, it was the largest since 1964, representing a record scale not seen in roughly 60 years.
- On February 26, 2025, the Commissioner of the FDMA requested deployment of the Emergency Fire Response Teams. Ultimately, the Emergency Fire Response Teams were dispatched from 15 prefectures. Including support units within Iwate Prefecture and the local fire department, a maximum of 2,100 personnel per day engaged in firefighting operations from both the ground and the air.
- While some volunteer firefighters were themselves affected by the disaster, the Ofunato City volunteer fire corps engaged in activities including collecting damage information, firefighting in coordination with fire units, and remaining-fire processing. In particular, images and videos shared on social media by corps members and provided to Ofunato City's disaster management authorities led to the rapid issuance of evacuation instructions.



Conditions in the vicinity of the fire site in Ofunato City

	Wildfire in Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture	Wildfire in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture	Wildfire in Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture
Time report received	February 26, 2025, 13:02	March 23, 2025, 15:53	March 23, 2025, 15:02
Time brought under control	March 9, 17:00	March 31, 11:00	March 28, 12:00
Time extinguished	April 7, 17:30	April 14, 15:00	April 11, 12:00
Human casualties	1 fatality	4 injured	-
Building damage	90 residential buildings, 136 non-residential buildings	5 residential buildings, 22 non-residential buildings	6 non-residential buildings
Burned area	Approx. 3,370 ha	481.6 ha	486 ha
Scale of Emergency Fire Response Teams activities	Cumulative total of 7,618 teams, 28,225 personnel, and 10 helicopters (dispatched from 15 prefectures)	Total 636 troops, 2,301 people, 6 helicopters (dispatched from 8 prefectures)	-



The Ofunato City volunteer fire corps in action during the wildfire in Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture



The Emergency Fire Response Team in action during the wildfire in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture



The Okayama City Fire Department in action during the wildfire in Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture

Assessment of the Fire and Future Measures

- The FDMA reviewed fire and disaster prevention measures in light of the wildfire in Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture.
- The FDMA will place even greater emphasis on strengthening fire and disaster prevention measures, including establishing wildfire advisories and wildfire warnings and issuing them appropriately, and further enhancing and strengthening the Emergency Fire Response Teams, full-time fire services, and the volunteer fire corps.



Presentation of the report of the Study Group on Fire and Disaster Prevention Measures in the Wake of the Wildfire in Ofunato City

Earthquake with an epicenter near the Tokara Islands

- Seismic activity intensified in the vicinity of the Tokara Islands, Kagoshima Prefecture, beginning on June 21, 2025. Seismic intensity of lower 5 was recorded at observation points in the affected area on June 30 and July 2, and seismic intensity of lower 6 was observed on July 3.
- On July 3, Kagoshima Prefecture’s disaster prevention helicopter conducted information-gathering and shared evacuation-site video footage with the Crisis Response Office at the Prime Minister’s Office and other relevant government units.
- After the July 3 earthquake, which registered seismic intensity lower 6, volunteer firefighters on Akusekijima and other islands conducted damage assessments and guided evacuations. They remained on the islands thereafter and continued activities such as confirming the safety of residents.



State of the evacuation site on Akuseki Island, Toshima Village (provided by the Kagoshima Prefecture disaster prevention helicopter)

Human casualties
none reported

Earthquake with an Epicenter Near the Kamchatka Peninsula

- At approximately 8:25 a.m. on July 30, 2025, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake occurred with an epicenter near the Kamchatka Peninsula. As a result, tsunami warnings and tsunami advisories were issued for coastal areas extending from Hokkaido to the Miyakojima and Yaeyama regions. At peak, evacuation instructions were issued to more than approximately 2 million residents.
- Because tsunami warnings and advisories remained in effect for an extended period amid extreme heat, the FDMA disseminated precautionary guidance on preventing heat stroke among evacuees.

Human casualties
1 fatality, 19 injured

Heavy Rainfall Beginning August 6, 2025

- From August 6 to August 12, atmospheric conditions became extremely unstable over a wide area extending from northern Japan to western Japan. In some locations, record-breaking rainfall was observed, including the highest 24-hour precipitation levels ever recorded.
- In Kumamoto Prefecture, support units from three prefectural fire departments were dispatched to the Yatsushiro Fire Department. Based on mutual aid arrangements, disaster prevention helicopters from Nagasaki, Saga, and Kagoshima prefectures conducted information-gathering and rescue operations.



Rescue operations (Provided by the Yatsushiro Regional Fire and Emergency Department)

Human casualties	Residential building damage
8 fatalities, 40 injured, 1 missing	11,373 structures

Heavy Rainfall Beginning September 3, 2025

- From September 3 onward, heavy rainfall caused extensive flooding across the Kanto, Tokai, and Kyushu regions. In Shizuoka Prefecture, a tornado of one of the strongest intensities ever recorded in Japan occurred, affecting areas from Makinohara City to Yoshida Town.
- As emergency measures for damaged houses and other structures, the Shizuoka City Fire Bureau responded to cases that posed a direct risk of harm to residents, prioritizing response based on urgency and hazard level.



High-altitude operations by fire services (Provided by the Shizuoka City Fire Bureau)

Human casualties	Residential building damage
2 fatalities, 95 injured	5,543 structures

History of the Emergency Fire Response Teams

- In response to the Great Hanshin–Awaji Earthquake that occurred in January 1995, the Emergency Fire Response Teams were established in June of the same year as a nationwide mutual assistance framework among fire service organizations. The team was created to enable lifesaving and related activities to be carried out more effectively and rapidly during large-scale disasters such as earthquakes in Japan.
- At the time of its establishment, 1,267 teams were registered. This number increased to 6,731 teams as of April 1, 2025. Since its launch, the Emergency Fire Response Teams have been deployed 47 times through November 2025. These deployments have responded to all types of large-scale disasters, including earthquakes, fires, landslides, and wind and flood disasters, and have involved lifesaving and related activities.



Scenes from search and rescue operations (Heavy Rainfall in Oku-Noto, September 2024)



Extinguishing remaining hot spots (Wildfire in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture)

Revision of the Basic Plan for the Emergency Fire Response Teams

- To ensure an appropriate response to large-scale disasters that pose an imminent threat, including a Nankai Trough earthquake, the force has increased the three main squads for firefighting, rescue, and ambulance services, as well as logistics support squads and aviation squads. In addition, Information Coordination Support Units, Safety Management Units, and Special Ambulance Task Force Coordination Units have been newly established, bringing the target number of registered teams to 7,200.
- Based on lessons learned from the Noto Peninsula earthquake, where it was difficult for large vehicles to advance by land, deployments were carried out using both land and air routes in coordination with the Self-Defense Forces and other organizations. Drawing on this experience, unit operations have been strengthened through the selection and configuration of deployment methods and vehicles suited to the specific characteristics of each disaster.
- Further strengthening of the Emergency Fire Response Teams will be pursued through the Seventh National Joint Training Exercise, scheduled to be conducted in Hokkaido and Miyagi Prefecture in FY2026.



Scenes from the Sixth National Joint Training Exercise of the Emergency Fire Response Teams (Shizuoka Prefecture)



Initiatives Informed by the 2025 Ofunato Wildfire and Related Incidents

- An accurate information-gathering framework will be established through the use of helicopters, drones, and other assets. At the same time, an early support request system will be developed by clarifying criteria for requesting assistance.
- Initiatives will also advance the development of vehicles and equipment effective for wildfire response, ensure thorough safety management, and strengthen firefighting operations conducted by aviation units.



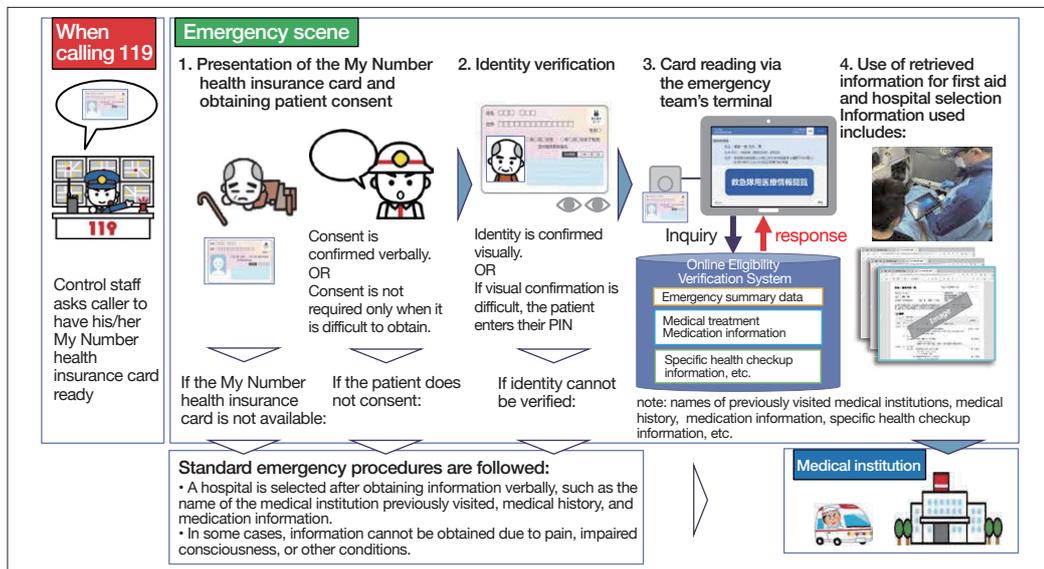
Helicopter operations (Wildfire in Ofunato City, Iwate Prefecture)

Current status of ambulance services

- During 2024, the total number of nationwide emergency dispatches by ambulance reached 7,718,380 cases, and the number of people transported by ambulance totaled 6,769,172, the highest figures recorded since statistics were first compiled in 1963.
- The average time required for ambulances to arrive at the scene was approximately 9.8 minutes, while the average time required to transport patients to a hospital was approximately 44.6 minutes. Both figures represent an increase compared with calendar year 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nationwide Rollout of the My Number–Based Emergency Medical System

- The My Number–based emergency medical system uses My Number health insurance cards to access information on injured or ill patients that contributes to hospital selection, including medical treatment and medication information, as well as specific health checkup data. This enables more appropriate medical care and smoother selection of destination hospitals.
- Beginning on October 1, 2025, verification of the system began simultaneously nationwide, covering all 720 fire department headquarters and 5,334 ambulance teams (representing 98% of regularly operated ambulance teams).
- In parallel, public outreach initiatives using a variety of media are being implemented to raise awareness of the system, and studies are underway to expand system functionality.



Government public-relations television commercial and social media advertising

Illustration of Rollout of the My Number–Based Emergency Medical System

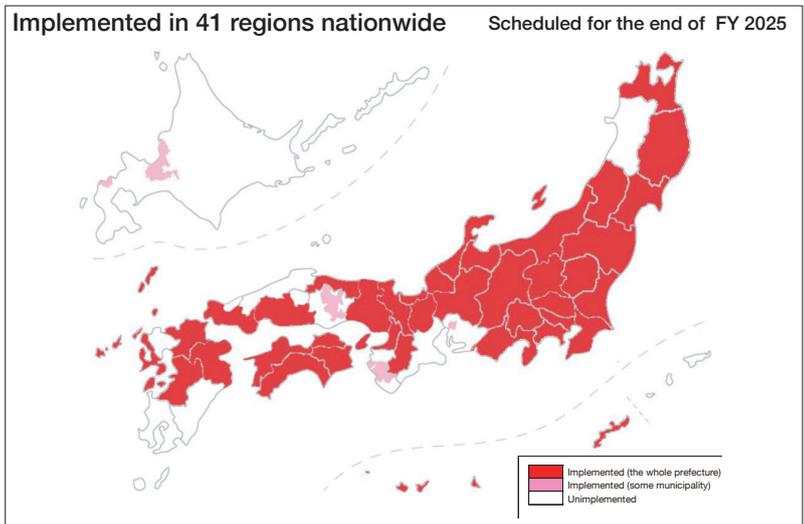
Responding to Growing Demand for Emergency Medical Services

■ Emergency Advice Center Project (#7119)

- The introduction of the Emergency Advice Center Project (#7119) is being promoted so that doctors, nurses, and EMTs can provide a telephone consultation service when someone suddenly falls ill or is injured and it is difficult to make decisions about issues such as whether it is better to call an ambulance or take them directly to a hospital.

■ Promoting the Introduction of Daytime Ambulance Teams

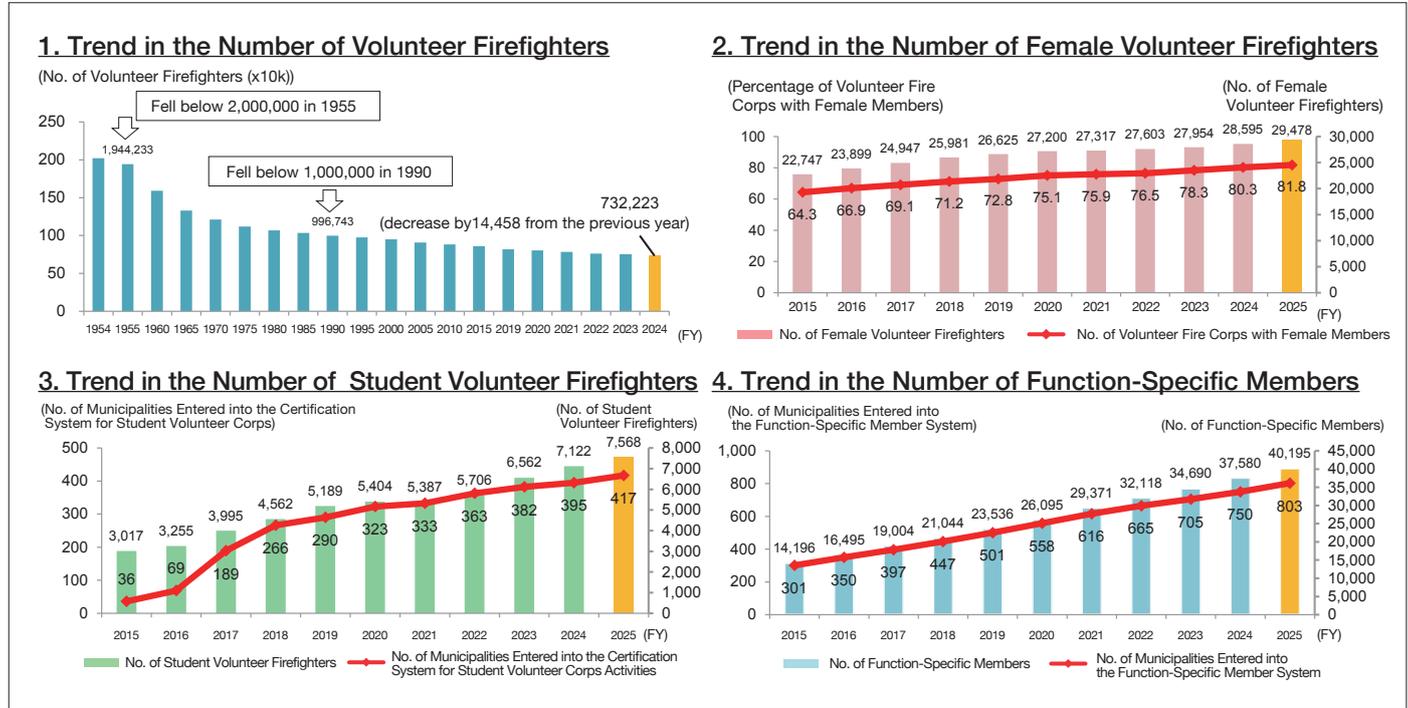
- From the perspective of accommodating diverse working arrangements for ambulance personnel and responding to the high volume of emergency calls during daytime hours, efforts are being made to promote consideration of so-called daytime ambulance teams, tailored to local conditions.



Status of the Emergency Advice Center Project (#7119)

Current state of the volunteer fire corps

- The number of volunteer firefighters decreases every year. As of April 1, 2025, the number decreased by 14,458 from the previous year, making a total of 732,223.
- Meanwhile, the number of female volunteer firefighters (up 3.1% year on year), student volunteer firefighters (up 6.3% year on year), and function-specific volunteer firefighters (up 7.0% year on year), which have been priority targets of recruitment and retention efforts, has continued to increase.



Efforts to enhance and strengthen the volunteer fire corps

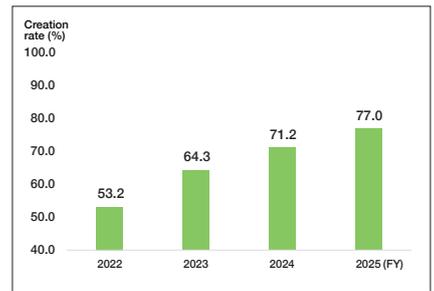
- Promoting Recruitment and Retention Among a Broad Range of Residents
 - In January 2025, a “Manual for Recruiting Volunteer Firefighters” was developed to serve as a reference for initiatives aimed at encouraging participation among a broad range of residents, including women and younger generations. The manual presents practical approaches such as highlighting the appeal of volunteer fire service and reducing the burden on members.
 - Through the Volunteer Fire Corps Capability Enhancement Model Program, support is being provided for initiatives that respond to changing social conditions. These include creating environments that make it easier for volunteer firefighters to participate and promoting the use of digital technologies.
- Strengthening Equipment and Resources
 - Beginning in FY 2025, tablet devices designed to be deployed together with drones were newly added as eligible equipment under the Volunteer Fire Corps Equipment Improvement Subsidy Program.
 - Based on lessons learned from the Noto Peninsula earthquake, off-road motorcycles capable of traveling on steep roads and rough terrain were newly added, beginning in FY 2025, to the list of fire vehicles provided free of charge.
 - Beginning in FY 2025, special local allocation tax measures have been introduced to cover expenses related to volunteer firefighters obtaining drone operation qualifications (Class I and Class II unmanned aircraft operator licenses).



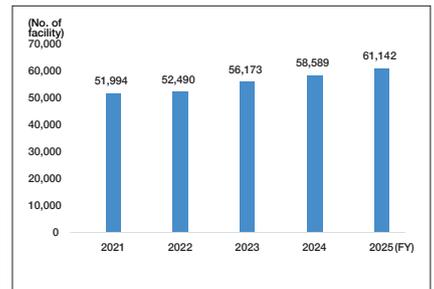
Example of equipment eligible for subsidy under the Volunteer Fire Corps Equipment Improvement Subsidy Program Fire vehicle provided free of charge and equipped with rescue equipment

Advancing Civil Protection Measures in Light of the Security Environment

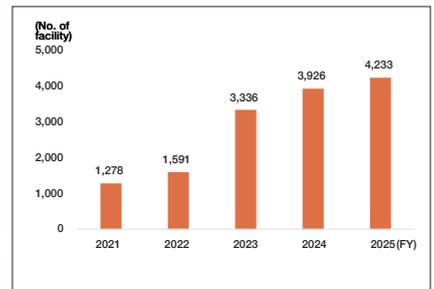
- Promoting the creation of patterns for evacuation implementation procedures
 - In order for each municipality to smoothly establish evacuation procedures for residents in the event of a civil protection incident, the FDMA is promoting efforts to prepare for multiple types of incident.
 - The FDMA, working with other national ministries and agencies, Okinawa Prefecture, and the five Sakishima Island municipalities (Ishigaki City, Miyakojima City, Tarama Village, Taketomi Town, and Yonaguni Town), has been conducting tabletop exercises on wide-area evacuation to Kyushu and Yamaguchi prefectures. These exercises simulate scenarios that escalate to anticipated armed attack situations. The FDMA is promoting initiatives to improve the practical effectiveness of evacuations based on the outcomes of these exercises, including encouraging municipalities to incorporate evacuation methods and route planning into evacuation implementation patterns.
- Promoting the Designation of Evacuation Facilities
 - To reduce damage from blast pressure and other effects, the FDMA is working with relevant ministries and agencies to promote designation of emergency temporary evacuation facilities by local governments.



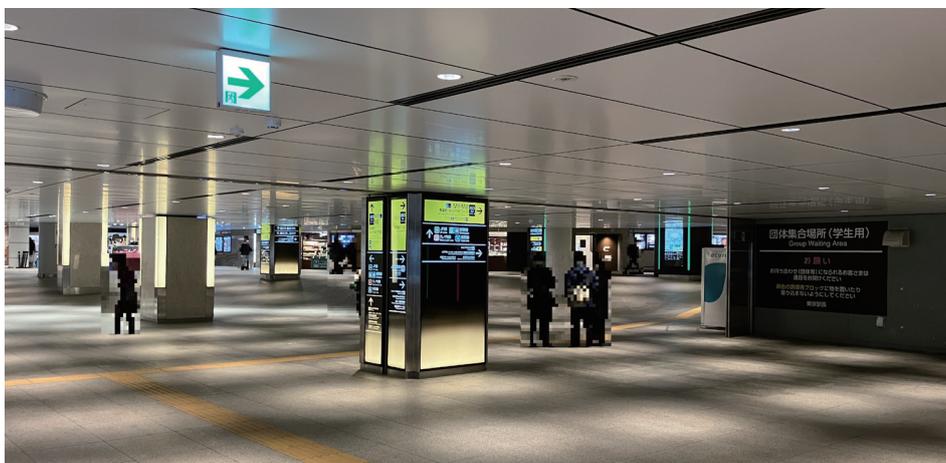
Trends in the Percentage of Municipalities with Multiple Evacuation Patterns



Trends in Emergency temporary evacuation facilities



Trend in underground facilities among designated temporary evacuation facilities



Emergency temporary underground evacuation facility (Tokyo Station)

- Development of Specified Temporary Evacuation Facilities
 - As part of the government's fundamental efforts to secure evacuation facilities (shelters) for armed attack scenarios, the development of specified temporary evacuation facilities has been positioned as a key initiative. The FDMA is supporting the development of specified temporary evacuation facilities in Taketomi Town and Tarama Village among the five Sakishima Island municipalities.

	Taketomi Town	Tarama Village
(Planned) Facility Location	Basement of new Ōhara Government Office, Iriomote Island 	Basement of new resident housing development 
(Planned) Non-Emergency Use	Conference rooms, Offices	Multipurpose hall, Offices

Planned Locations and Uses of Specified Temporary Evacuation Facilities

- Strengthening Joint Civil Protection Training
 - For joint civil protection training between national and local governments, the FDMA is working with the Cabinet Secretariat to further promote nationwide initiatives, including resident evacuation drills that simulate ballistic missile scenarios.



Resident evacuation drill simulating a ballistic missile scenario

Promoting DX and New Technologies in Fire Services

Promotion Framework within the FDMA

- To promote DX and new technologies in fire services, the FDMA established a Technology Strategy Office within its General Affairs Division in April 2025.

Fire Technology Strategy Council

- The FDMA convenes the Fire Technology Strategy Council to examine fire technology strategy from a medium- to long-term perspective. The council identifies priority fields for ongoing research and development, strengthens coordination with relevant organizations, and promotes implementation and deployment of technologies at operational sites.



Scene from a Fire Technology Strategy Council meeting

Status of Research, Development, and Practical Application

- The FDMA promotes research, development, and practical application of new technologies through the National Research Institute of Fire and Disaster and the Promotion Program for Scientific Fire and Disaster Prevention Technologies (a competitive research funding program).

Fire Spread Simulation for Wildfire Response

- Based on lessons learned from the Ofunato City wildfire, the Agency is developing fire spread simulations capable of predicting wildfire progression with high accuracy. These simulations can evaluate fire expansion across forested and urban areas, as well as firebrand dispersion ranges.

AI-Based Optimization of Ambulance Operations

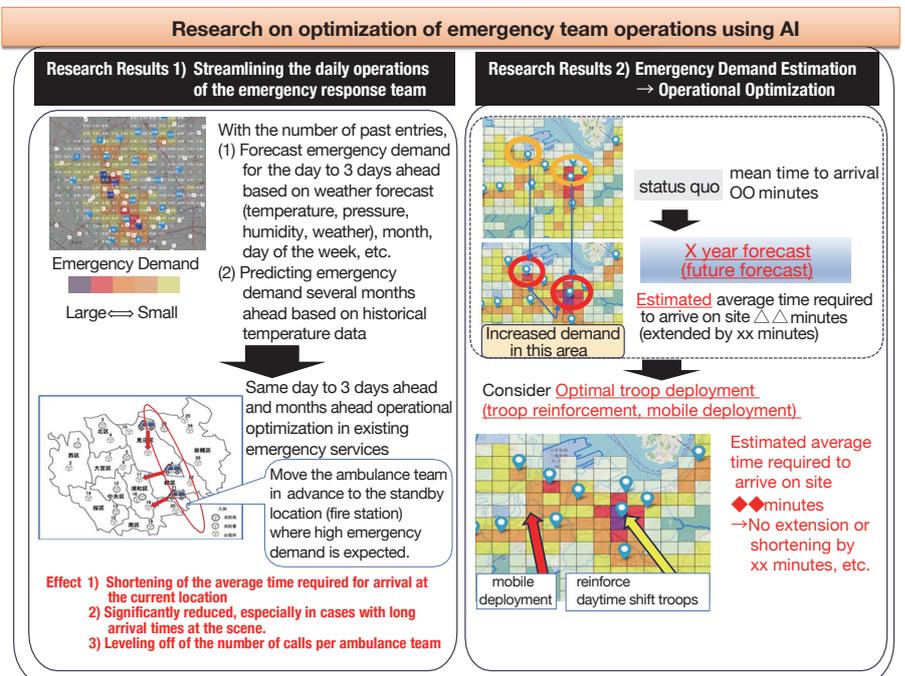
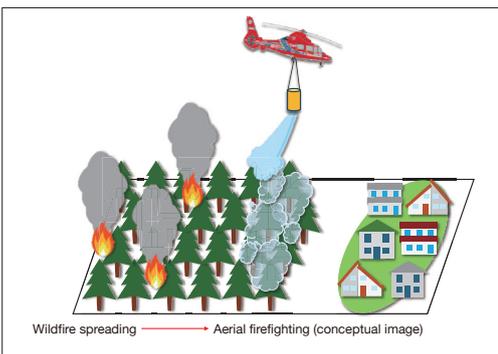
- To reduce ambulance response times, the Agency is developing AI-based ambulance operation optimization systems. In 2025, twelve fire department headquarters are examining their introduction, with demonstration studies currently underway at four headquarters.

Research on New Aerial Firefighting Techniques Using Environmentally Friendly Foam Agents

- Drawing on the Ofunato City wildfire experience, research is underway to establish new aerial firefighting techniques using environmentally friendly soap-based foam agent.



Fire spread simulation for wildfire response



AI-based ambulance operation optimization methods

Topic 1 Establishment of Wildfire Advisories and Wildfire Warnings and Appropriate Issuance

- The FDMA revised the Model Fire Prevention Ordinance based on recommendations in the “Report of the Study Group on Fire and Disaster Prevention Measures Following the Ofunato City Wildfire,” which addressed the proper approach to prevention and warnings for wildfires.
- Specifically, the FDMA has established two mechanisms: the Wildfire Advisory, which imposes a voluntary duty on residents to restrict fire use in areas surrounding forests, and the Wildfire Warning, which restricts fire use based on the Fire Service Act. At the same time, the Model Fire Prevention Ordinance was amended to clearly incorporate a notification system for bonfires.

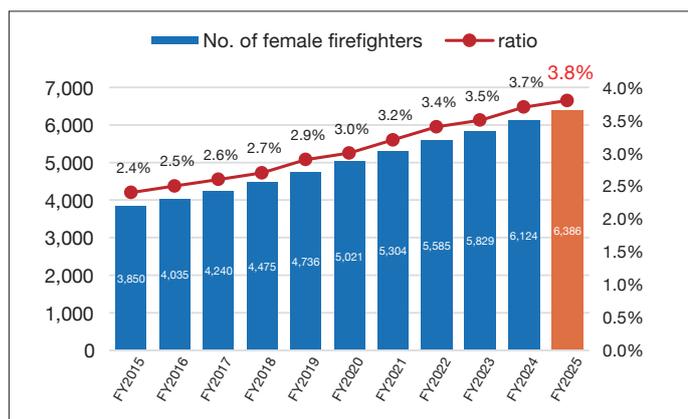
[Wildfire Advisory and Wildfire Warning: Issuance Criteria (Examples) and Content]

	Wildfire Advisory	Wildfire Warning (using the existing fire warning system under the Fire Service Act)
Issuance Criteria (Example)	Total precipitation over the previous 3 days: 1mm or less + Total precipitation over the previous 30 days: 30mm or less, OR a Dry Weather Advisory has been issued Note: Except when precipitation is expected on the day in question or snow cover is present	In addition to the issuance criteria at left, a Strong Wind Advisory has been issued
Content	Advisory on fire use outdoors (no penalties)	Restrictions on fire use outdoors (with penalties)

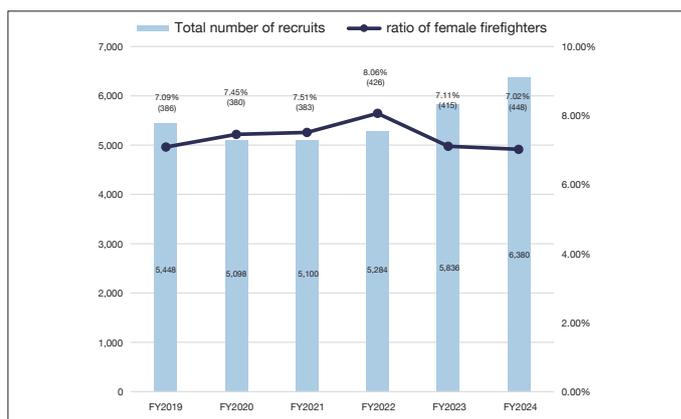
Note: Municipalities may adjust issuance criteria based on regional characteristics and may limit the applicable area.

Topic 2 Initiatives to Promote the Active Participation of Women in Fire Service

- The FDMA has established a new target for the ratio of female firefighters to serve as a guideline for fire departments overall: to ultimately raise the ratio of female firefighters to around 10%, with an initial goal of having women comprise at least 10% of new recruits within five years (by FY 2031).



Trends in the ratio of female firefighter



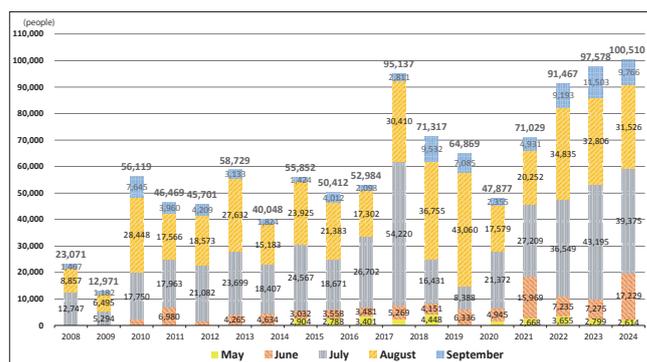
Trends in the ratio of female firefighter

Topic 3 Heat Stroke Emergency Transport Status and Prevention Awareness Initiatives

- In 2025 (May through September), the nationwide number of people transported by ambulance due to heat stroke reached 100,510, the highest figure since statistics began in 2008.
- The FDMA posted heat stroke prevention awareness content on its website and called for implementation of basic heat stroke prevention measures such as appropriate use of air conditioning. The FDMA also requested that prefectures and fire departments implement prevention awareness initiatives early, without waiting for summer.



Heat Stroke Prevention Awareness Materials



Trends in the number of people transported by ambulance due to heat stroke (2008–2025)

Topic 4 Fire Safety Measures for the Characteristics of Simple Sauna Equipment

- Based on the nationwide increase in simple saunas where heating equipment (sauna stoves) is installed inside outdoor tents or barrels, the FDMA conducted safety verification through experiments and compiled fire prevention measures appropriate to their characteristics.
- The FDMA revised relevant laws and regulations to implement fire safety measures appropriate to the characteristics of simple sauna equipment, including requirements to maintain clearance distances between heating equipment and surrounding combustibles to prevent ignition.



Barrel-type sauna



Tent-type sauna



Thermal conditions inside sauna rooms

Topic 5 AI Use at Self Service Gasoline Stations

- As technological innovation and digitalization rapidly advance across various sectors, there are expectations that using AI for safety confirmation and other tasks performed by employees at self-service gasoline stations will improve operational efficiency.
- Based on the results of demonstration experiments, the FDMA is developing safety standards for the introduction of conditional automated AI systems that can automatically grant refueling authorization in place of employees under certain conditions.



Self service gasoline station conducting demonstration experiments

Topic 6 Promoting International Cooperation and Exchange

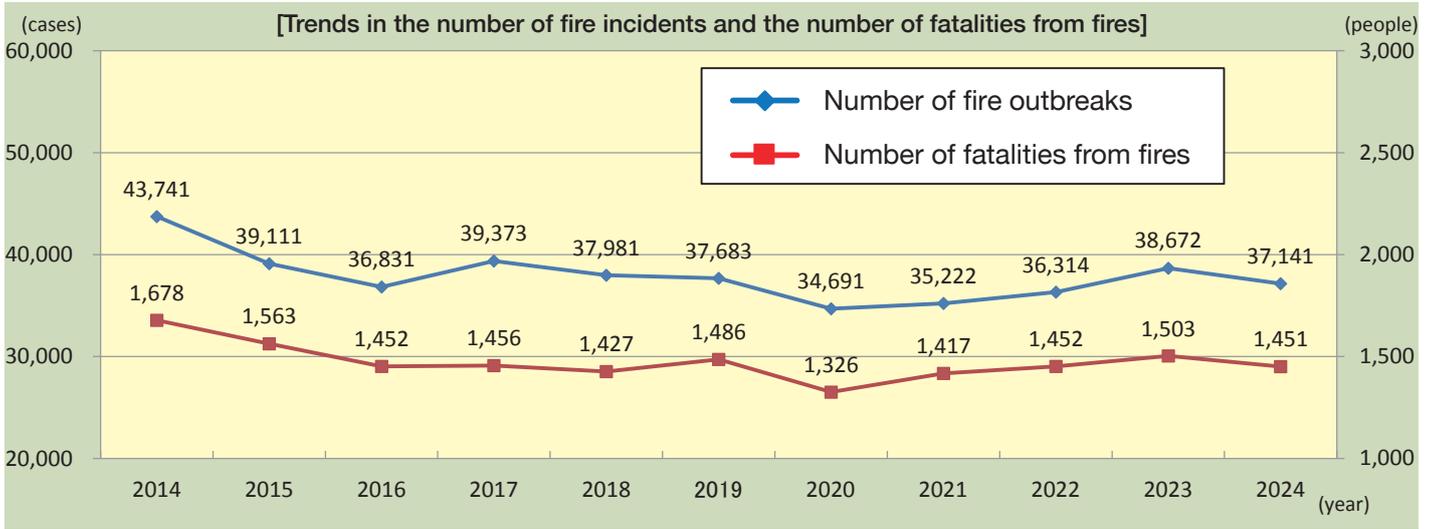
- To contribute to improving fire and disaster prevention capabilities in developing countries, the FDMA holds an annual International Fire and Disaster Prevention Forum to broadly introduce Japan's fire service technologies and systems. In FY2024, the forum was held in Indonesia.
- Firefighting vehicles and other equipment no longer used by fire departments and volunteer fire corps are freely donated to developing countries to improve their disaster response capabilities and to promote face-to-face international cooperation.



Technical guidance during vehicle donation (March 2025, Cambodia)

Elementary Item | Fire Prevention **Number of Fire Incidents/Number of Fatalities from Fires**

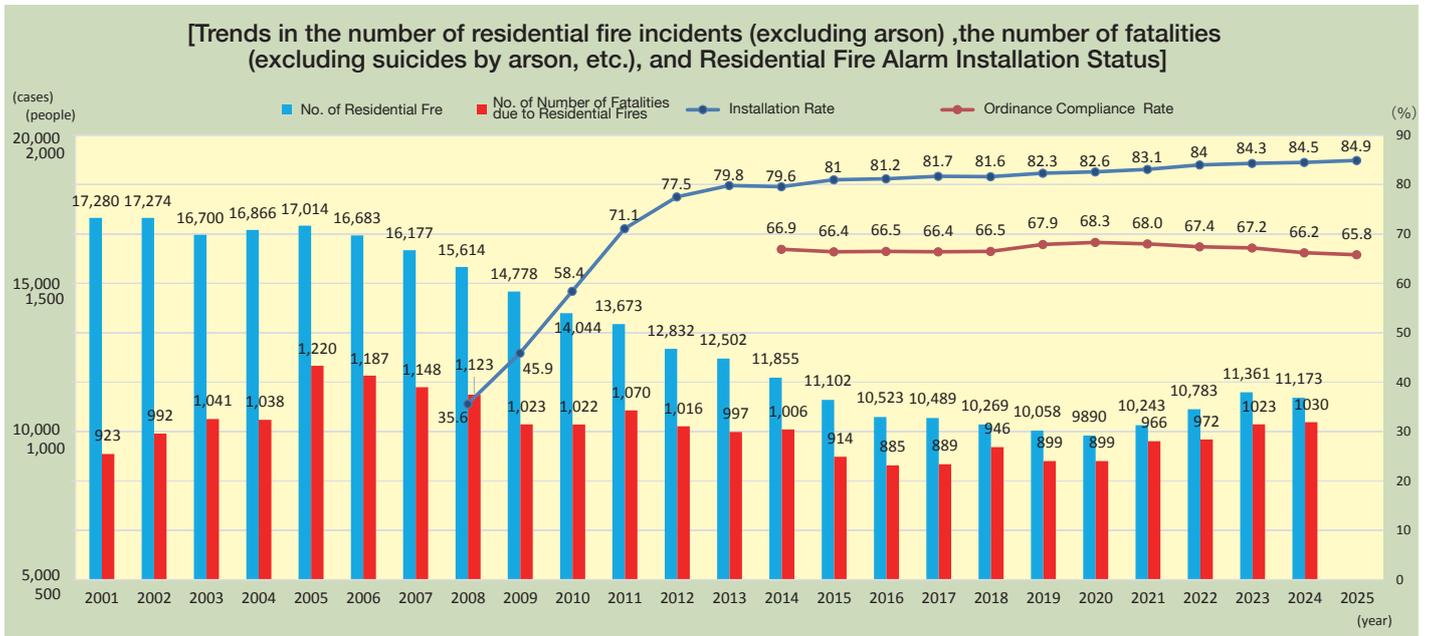
- The number of fires and deaths from fires nationwide had shown a long-term downward trend, but in recent years it has generally remained stable.
- The number of fires in 2024 was 37,141 (decreased by 1,531 from the previous year), 84.9% of that of 10 years ago.
- The number of fatalities from fires was 1,451 (52 less than the previous year), 86.5% of 10 years ago.



Notes: 1. Prepared based on "Fire Report"
 2. See the left axis for the "Number of fire outbreaks" and the right axis for the "Number of fatalities from fire"

Elementary Item | Fire Prevention **Number of Residential Fire Incidents/Fatalities, Residential Fire Alarm Installation Status**

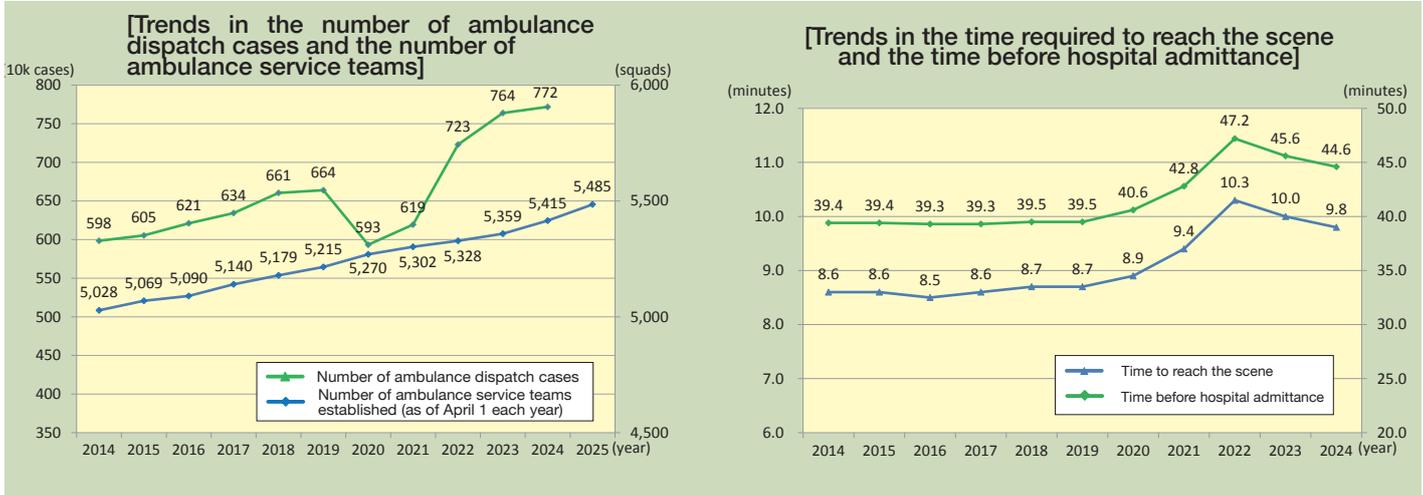
- The majority of deaths from fire occur in residential fires.
- The number of residential fire incidents in 2024 was 11,173 (188 less than the previous year), and the number of fatalities was 1,030 (7 more than the previous year).
- The installation rate of residential fire alarms is increasing every year. As of June 1, 2025 the rate nationwide was 84.9%, and the rate of compliance with regulations 65.8%.



Notes: 1. Prepared based on "Fire Report" and "the Survey Result Residential Fire Alarm Installation Status"
 2. The installation rate: The share of households that have installed residential fire alarms in at least one location of the sections of their home in which they are obligated to do so by municipal fire prevention ordinances (including households that are exempt from installing residential fire alarms on account of having installed fire alarm systems, etc.) out of the total number of households.
 3. The ordinance compliance rate: The share of households that have installed residential fire alarms in every section of their home in which they are obligated to do so by municipal fire prevention ordinances (including households that are exempt from installing residential fire alarms on account of having installed fire alarm systems, etc.) out of the total number of households.
 4. The number of residential fires and the fatalities in residential fires in 2025 are not yet determined

Elementary Item | Ambulance System Status of Ambulance Service Operations

- The number of ambulance service dispatch cases in 2024 was approximately 7,720,000 (an increase of approximately 80,000 compared to the previous year).
- As of April 1, 2025, there were 5,485 ambulance teams (an increase of 70 compared to the previous year).
- In 2024 the average time required to reach the scene was approximately 9.8 minutes (an increase of approximately 1.1 minutes compared to 2019, the year before the novel coronavirus infection disaster (hereinafter referred to as the “COVID-19 pandemic”).
- In 2024 the average time before hospital admittance was 44.6 minutes (an increase of approximately 5.1 minutes compared to 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic).

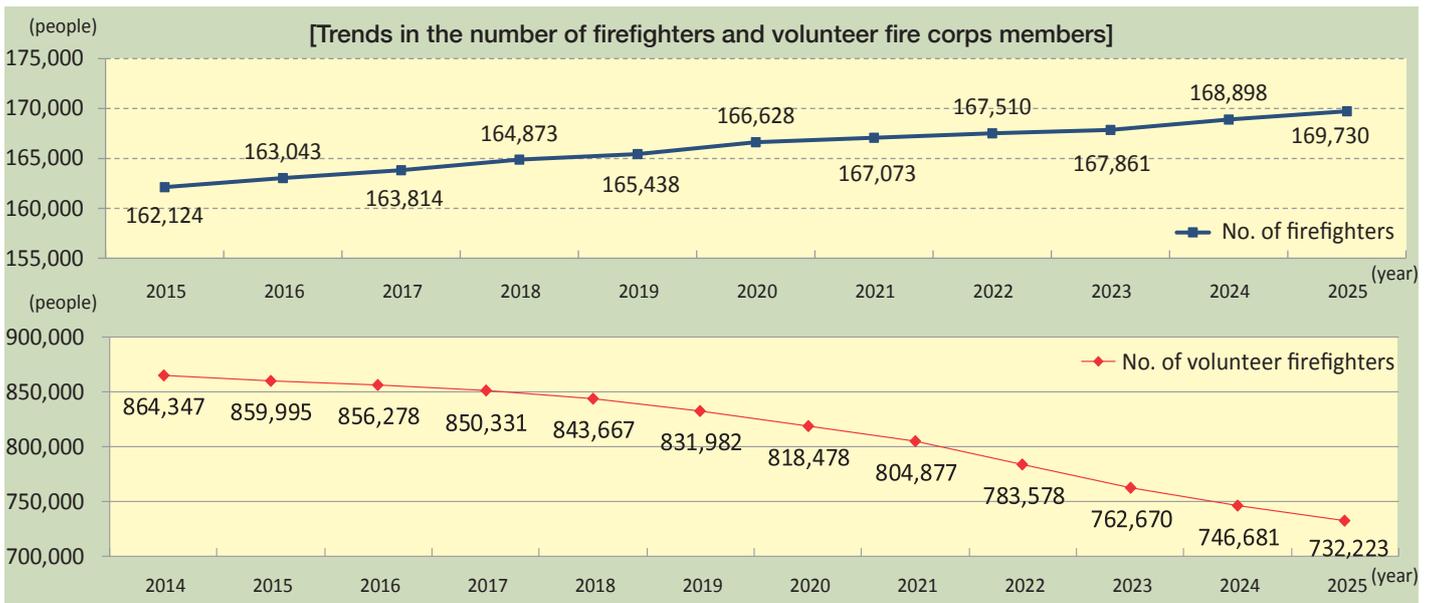


Notes: 1. Prepared based on “Fire Report”

2. The graph on the left refers to the left column regarding the number of ambulance dispatch cases, and to the column on the right regarding the number of established ambulance teams (as of April 1st of each year)
3. The graph on the right refers to the left column regarding the time required to reach the scene, and to the column on the right regarding time before hospital admittance

Elementary Item | Firefighting System Fire Defense Organization

- Fire departments (as of April 1, 2025)
 - There are 720 fire departments, with 1,716 fire stations. There are 169,730 firefighters (an increase of 832 compared to the previous year).
- Volunteer fire corps (as of April 1, 2025)
 - There are 2,169 volunteer fire corps, with 732,223 volunteer firefighters (a decrease of 14,458 compared to the previous year).
 - Volunteer fire corps are the non-standing firefighting agencies in the municipalities. They are in every municipality.



Note: 1. Number of firefighters created using the “Survey on the Current State of Fire and Disaster Prevention and Earthquake Countermeasures”

2. Number of volunteer firefighters created using the “Survey on the Current State of Fire and Disaster Prevention and Earthquake Countermeasures” and the “Survey Regarding the Organization of Volunteer Fire Corps” the total number of households.