# An ounce of preparation helps while stationed in Japan

**Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs**

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) set Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness Four or TCCOR IV Sept. 18. Around noon the next day, CFAY set TCOOR III and at 2:15 p.m. local time, CFAY set TCCOR I. The CFAY community prepared for the storm and waited for the "All Clear".

Jeff Lindaman, CFAY Emergency Management Officer, explained that people need to prepare before a storm gets to Yokosuka. The command does forecasting based on readings from around base and they also monitor the Japanese websites and their weather forecasting but people still need to be prepared in case the situation changes quickly.

Destructive winds and rain a typhoon brings can cause damage to government or personnel property. The best way to prevent damage is to either bring lose items inside or to tie them to something that won't blow around like part of a building or a fence.

During the storm the ocean became more agitated by the wind and the waves grew in strength and intensity. When forecasters measure the ocean's condition it's called the current "sea state." "The winds from the storm drive the seas and can cause a high storm surge," said Muth. A storm surge is a large wave or series of waves that are cause by large storms like typhoons. "The waves and rain can cause flooding so that is also a concern during a storm," said Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center (NAOC) Yokosuka Public Affairs Officer Aerographer's Mate 1st Class Travis Muth, in a previous interview.

Typhoons are not the only natural disaster that can effect the CFAY community. Residents also need to be ready for tsunami and earthquakes that could potentially happen in areas close to the base.

Lindaman explained that when a tsunami warning is issued the best plan is to travel up hill. He advised that while every location and neighborhood is different, traffic and construction or obstructions can change any route. The basic plan is to go uphill, any hill that will provide a safety distance from the wave is good to travel up.

Earthquakes do not give people a lot of time to respond but when shaking starts, people should get away from heavy furniture or other items that could fall down and find a safe place to wait for tremors to stop like a door way.

Lindaman explained that before and after natural disasters there will always be information available. People should stay tuned to the command information channels like channel 15, website, Facebook site, Youtube site, Eagle 810 radio station, big voice notifications or official email. There will also be information put out in the first floor of housing towers and at community centers.

For more information on how to stay prepared visit http://cnic.navy.mil/Yokosuka/index.htm and click on the preparedness checklist on the right hand side.

**Personnel from Naval Facilities Engineering Command Far East work to remove a tree from the top of a car where the tree fell during a recent storm. Disaster preparedness in Japan means understanding that a storm can happen anytime and can cause damage to surrounding structures.**

# NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka employees support earthquake victims

**By H. Sam Samuelson,**
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Six months following the most devastating earthquake in Japan's recorded history, one NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center (NAVSUP FLC) Yokosuka employee continues to lead a cadre of Japanese and Department of Defense (DoD) employees to the crumbled ruins inside the coast of the hardest hit areas of Japan's Tohoku region.

Homes, schools, hospitals and civil evacuation sites still required scrubbing or scrapping, depending on the level of damage to the communities hardest hit by the tsunamis March 11.

"My first endeavor was in Ishinomaki City in Miyagi Prefecture," said Toshiyuki Ito, NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka command interpreter and translator. "That was in April. The work was to clean up victims' houses."

Ito initiated the effort on his own.

At first, individual volunteers outside of the areas were neither invited nor welcomed by any local volunteer centers in the interest of safety and insufficient accommodations.

However, around mid-April, some volunteer centers began to invite out-of-prefecture supporters for relief activities. With that, Ito instantly made the 574 kilometer (357 mile), 7-hour trek north from Yokosuka in his four-wheel-drive Jeep to begin work by himself.

Because he teaches English on Saturdays, Ito could only commit to Sundays for volunteer work.

"I wasn't sure that my single-day field work would be of any help," Ito said. "A lot of other volunteers were staying there for a few weeks, some, a few months. What would I be able to do, one day at a time on a weekend?"

Toshiyuki departed on a Saturday night, drove north through the night and arrived to eight hours of labor cleaning and clearing in Miyagi Prefecture.

It was especially difficult for Ito to envision where his work would start, since the swath of devastation extended from horizon to horizon.

"The environment was total devastation," Ito said. "I had only seen those scenes on TV disaster movies. Roads were cracked or missing. Stores and houses that were still standing were torn, windows broken and covered in dirt. Cars, boats and traffic lights littered interior floors and roofs. At one point, where my Global Positioning System showed there was a train station in front of me, there was only a block of concrete, like a platform. The station was gone.

**NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka employees join other volunteers in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture following a pain-staking search and clean up of a field once swept by a tsunami spawned by the strongest earthquake in Japan's recorded history March 11.**
**Photo by Yohsuke Onda**

"We worked on two houses. Both houses had dirt caked into the ceilings. One wall in the first floor living room had a gaping hole where a car had floated through and landed on top of another car leaning against another wall.

"Drawers were wet and soaked still with dirty, wet and stinky clothes. Even one month and 13 days after the earthquake there was no electricity, gas or water, but – quite surprising – we discovered a family had been living on the second floor of the house I worked on, in an eight-tatami mat sized room (approximately eight feet square room whose traditional flooring is tightly woven straw mats).

"The family wanted to evacuate to a nearby school, but the site had also been hit by the tsunami and they did not know an alternative location, and they were not comfortable leaving their home unattended for long."

Ito said he sensed hope, not only with the family, but among the other survivors.

"But I questioned myself so much. On my way back, I knew I did something. It might just be a little work, but a little contribution from one individual on just one day would create a lot of help if that mindset is shared by many people."

In fact, the effort grew. Toshiyuki elected to go again, and was joined during later excursions by fellow NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka Japanese colleagues, Yohsuke Onda, editorial and designer; and Mike O'Donnell, Commander Submarine Force, Pacific Fleet, Priority Material Office (PMO), Yokosuka Detachment supervisor, along with many others.

"It was amazing even six months after the earthquake, the destruction still present; it was beyond words," O'Donnell said. "The amazing thing was how high the waves came. It wasn't just the flat lands that were destroyed.

"We cleared out a field larger than a football field with basic hand tools, due to the possibility of finding human remains. We were most likely the first crews in that area since 11 Mar 11, according to Ito."

O'Donnell said he would never forget the effort.

"I am glad I did this and would do it again if asked. However, it was not a happy fun day. It was a very different feeling; I do not know how to put it into words what I felt, especially in light of the fact that, in our area, 200 people were still missing. The city seemed so unpopulated because as many as 2,300 houses were washed away from the most populated residential area of the city."

Ito continues to make his way north on weekends when he can and says he will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

Recently, 12 other NAVSUP FLC Yokosuka employees joined the effort, Yuko Takano, Kumiko Toi and her daughter Harmony, Kenji Abe, Shinji Kobayashi, Takeshi Ikeda, Shinju Watanabe, Akira Yahata, Tomoko Mitomori, Miki Inaba, Takayuki Fujita, Tetsu Hiyoshi and Masato Washizu.

"But we can always use more volunteers," he said. "I will be going again toward the middle to end of October.

"Why do I do this? I feel I don't have a reason, but, of course, it is to help – to do whatever I can," Ito said. "I will continue to go until there is a time they don't need us. And then I will visit there as a tourist and spend some time and money there. That's my plan."