
LARGE SCALE DISASTER AND PUBLIC SPORT FACILITIES

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Abstract

Aim of abstract

Both local governments and the national government build many of the public sports facilities contributing to the promotion of health and cultural activities in Japan. And we have continued to research the management of facilities and administrative organizations. Nowadays, however, many countries are called on to reduce their administrative burden and therefore put these facilities in the hands of the private sector with the aim of administrative efficiency and specialization. As a result, these facilities are additionally treated as a financial burden.

Once a disaster occurs, the character of large scale facilities, including public sport facilities, undergo a complete change. We are reminded of the value of the public sports facility when they function as a disaster countermeasures office, volunteer center, evacuation center, supply station, temporary dwelling or mortuary. And now, we are faced with a variety of large scale disasters. Naturally this differs from the situation in foreign countries. Therefore this study aims to describe the pattern of public sports facilities in large scale disasters in our country.

Theoretical background or literature review

In the related literature, several research papers are found (Matheson & Baade, 2006; Klein, J.G., & Huang, L. 2007). In the field of Disaster Science, emergency management is said to be composed of pre-disaster risk management and post-disaster crisis management. Kawata (2003, p44) has divided crisis management into the following chronological order: 1. Direct, 2. Urgent, 3. Emergent, 4. Recovery, and 5. Social mitigation. In this research I adopt Kawata's proposed chronological framework to compare the timeline of post-disaster activities, in order to investigate local governments' disaster preparation measures and plans.

Methodology

In this case study I conducted several longitudinal interview surveys from January 2014 to March 2014 targeting the local government officers in the Disaster Prevention Division and Sports Promotion Division. The areas studied are noted for recurrent extraordinary heavy snowfall or catastrophic flooding. The surveys focused on sports facilities' disaster prevention plans. Verbatim reports were made on the basis of hour long interviews. The interviewer and interviewee checked the reports to ensure their validity. A political scientist and an organizational sociologist were also employed for the securement of methodological triangulation. In addition, this study reviewed governmental internal records regarding wide scale disasters in the survey areas.

Results

First, heavy snow does not occur in an unexpected fashion like an earthquake or a tsunami, so it is extremely unusual for local residents to evacuate. Further, we cannot conceive a worst case scenario because the investigation area always receives heavy snowfall, and they are well-prepared for snow removal and disposal. The only potential risk is the destruction of homes in an avalanche. Consequently, local governments adopt measures to temporarily move elderly residents from mountain areas to the lowland. Large public sport facilities are designated to be used in emergency and sports facilities have been built to improve living conditions in snow areas using governmental act for special measures concerning snow disaster.

Secondly, the flood disasters in Japan are different from longitudinal flood as typified in the case of Thailand. In Japan sudden heavy rain cause rivers to overflow and leads to flooding. Prefectural and municipal level governments plan to use public sports facilities as local disaster-prevention bases, and they have established a standard of disaster emergency measures as a condition in the public offering of outsourcing contract management. Furthermore private sector businesses as the administrators of sports facilities routinely adopt flood disaster countermeasures.

Discussion

The government's estimated time to recover from heavy snowfall or flood is two to three months. The sports facilities designated by local governments as emergency shelters and secondary evacuation shelters have been designed with special floor plans, roofs or water pumping systems. This illustrates the important role of public sports facilities during disaster. Finally, this research makes clear through comparison with other large scale disasters that the Great East Japan Earthquake, whose recovery is still ongoing, was a disaster of unprecedented scale.

References

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