

1. Disaster Preparedness Special Feature Part 1: New Disaster Weather Information and When to Evacuate

Since late May 2026, Japan has introduced a new disaster weather information system.

To make it easier to understand what actions to take during emergencies, weather warnings now include numbered alert levels in their names. For example, a Heavy Rain Warning is now called a "Level 3 Heavy Rain Warning." Level 3 corresponds to an evacuation advisory for older adults and others who may need extra time to evacuate. Older adults, young children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities should begin evacuating at this stage.

The way flood warnings are issued for rivers has also changed. The previous flood warnings and advisories have been discontinued. Instead, warnings now differ depending on the type of river. For large rivers, a Flood Warning is now called a "Level 3 Flood Alert." For smaller rivers, it becomes a "Level 3 Heavy Rain Warning."

Information corresponding to Level 4, indicating that people in dangerous areas need to evacuate, is now issued as a "Danger Warning." For example, Landslide Alert Information is now called a "Level 4 Landslide Danger Warning."

If Tochigi City issues an evacuation order following a Level 4 Flood Danger Warning, a Level 4 Landslide Danger Warning, or another Level 4 warning, everyone should evacuate immediately to a safe location.

A Level 5 Flood Emergency Warning or a Level 5 Heavy Rain Emergency Warning means that lives are already in danger and it may no longer be possible to evacuate safely. You may already have missed the opportunity to evacuate. Going outside to reach an evacuation shelter could be extremely dangerous. Instead, move immediately to a place

that is safer than where you are now.

2. Disaster Preparedness Special Feature Part 2: Using the Hazard Map and Choosing Safe Evacuation Locations

What should you do when a Level 3 evacuation advisory for older adults or a Level 4 evacuation order is issued?

The Disaster Hazard Map is a map designed to help protect lives by showing disaster risks, evacuation shelters, and other important evacuation information for your area. It is available on the Tochigi City website. Check the Hazard Map regularly so you know the dangerous areas around your home and workplace, and plan safe evacuation destinations and routes in advance.

Because typhoons and other major weather events can often be forecast several days ahead, be sure to gather information from television, mobile phones, radio, and computers so you can prepare before a disaster occurs.

Evacuating does not always mean going to a city-designated emergency shelter.

There may be a better option for you than a crowded evacuation shelter. For example, you may be able to stay with relatives or friends who live in a safe area. You may also choose to evacuate by car to a safer location before conditions worsen.

The city also prepares priority evacuation shelters that are opened first during disasters. These include schools and community centers. Please check the city's website or official social media accounts to confirm which shelters are open before evacuating.

If the Hazard Map shows that your home is in a safe area, staying at home may be the safest option during a disaster.

Even if your home is located within a predicted flood area, you may be able to remain at home if the expected flood depth is less than 50 centimeters. If the expected flood depth is less than 3 meters, move to the second floor or higher.

The city has also signed agreements with private businesses to provide temporary evacuation areas for vehicles. During disasters, designated parking areas, including the rooftop parking lot at AEON Tochigi Store and other participating facilities, may be used as vehicle evacuation sites.

Before evacuating by car, please check Tochigi City's announcements to confirm that these sites have been opened. Roads may become flooded if evacuation is delayed, so please evacuate early.

3. The Specified Residence Card Program Begins

This is an announcement from the Immigration Services Agency of Japan.

Beginning June 14, 2026, a new Specified Residence Card has been introduced. This card combines the functions of a Residence Card and a My Number Card into a single card.

It is available to mid- to long-term foreign residents whose period of stay exceeds three months and who are registered in the Basic Resident Register, as well as to Special Permanent Residents.

Obtaining the new card is optional. Eligible residents may apply if they wish, or they may continue using separate Residence Cards and My Number Cards as before.

The biggest advantage of the Specified Residence Card is that when you renew your period of stay, your My Number information is updated automatically at the same time through Immigration Services. This eliminates the need to complete a separate procedure at City Hall, allowing many administrative procedures to be completed in one place. The card can also be used as a My Number Health Insurance Card and a My Number Driver's License.

However, you cannot apply only to switch to a Specified Residence Card. You may apply when renewing or changing your residence status, or when applying for permanent residence at an Immigration Services office. If you are newly entering Japan or changing your address after moving, you may also apply at your City Hall when completing those procedures.

Previously, Residence Cards were issued on the same day at Immigration Services

offices. Because the new Specified Residence Card requires integration with the My Number system, it takes at least about two weeks before the card is delivered.

In addition, beginning June 14, 2026, even standard Residence Cards that are not Specified Residence Cards will no longer display the period of stay, permission type, permission date, or issuance date on the front of the card. This information will instead be stored in the card's IC chip.