

Voluntary long-distance evacuation drill of an independent living centre, STEP Edogawa

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ABSTRACT

Background. Compared to able-bodied people, people with disabilities (PWD) face more difficulties in evacuation and shelter life during natural disasters. When a disaster is predictable, such as a typhoon, it is recommended to evacuate in advance to a long-distance area where there are no power and water cuts. However, the difficulties of arranging helpers is an issue in preventing evacuation. Therefore, the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) which provides helper dispatch services to about 50 PWD, conducted a voluntary long-distance evacuation drill involving users, helpers and their families. The experience of the drill will be shown in this presentation. Methods. STEP Edogawa, CIL, located in Tokyo, a 0-metre above sea level zone, conducted an overnight voluntary evacuation drill at a resort area, 180 km from the centre in 2022. A total of 40 participants used a single lift-equipped bus, a distance of three hours of drive on the map. In addition to helpers, the university students, who had no experience in assisting, were provided with assistance methods and attitudes by experienced persons on the day of the drill. Most participants slept in a former primary school gymnasium with Futon rented locally. One person with a cervical spinal cord injury used a portable air bed 46 cm high. The venue was set up and cleaned up by local university students. Group works were conducted in the afternoon of Day 1 and in the morning of Day 2 with the help of two disaster prevention consultants and three researchers. Results (1) Even with a lift-equipped bus, the maximum number of wheelchair users allowed on board was three, indicating that there were issues with the method of transportation at the time of disasters. 2) ALS patients with a ventilator noted that it was an opportunity to adjust the adequate amount of luggage and to know that Futon was too thin to have adequate sleep. 3) At the bus transfer stop for lunch, there was a significant difference in the time taken to buy and eat lunch between users who were used to travelling and those who were not used to travelling. Conclusion The results suggest the followings. 1) The way disabled people travel in groups needs to be co-ordinated in terms of means and helper arrangements. (2) The experience of travelling can also be useful for long-distance evacuation in terms of luggage preparation and food on the route.