

Photo 20      Inside Hyogo Prefectural Government Office  
Toppled file cabinets, hardly any space to step in  
Hyogo Prefectural Government

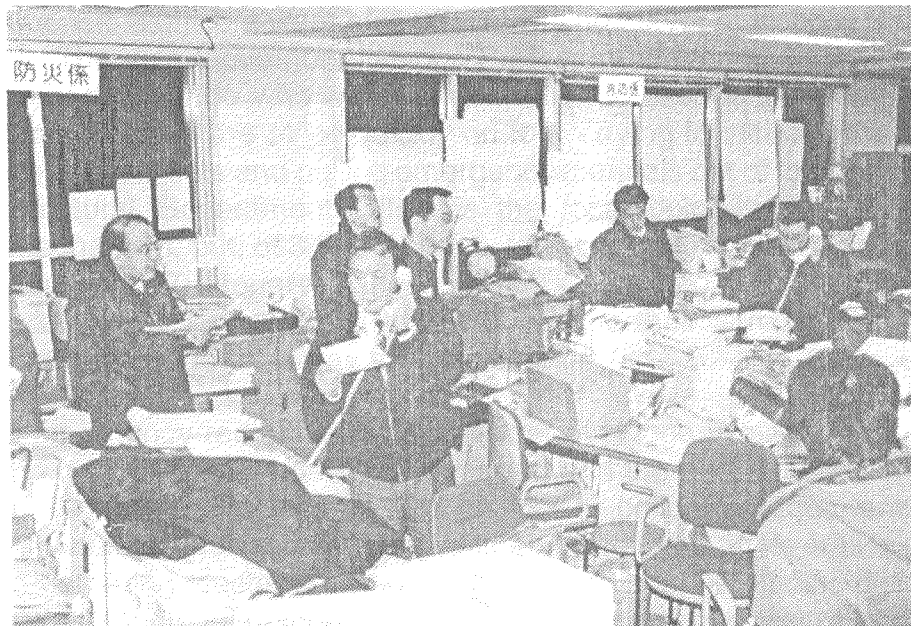


Photo 21      Hyogo Emergency Response Officers  
Initial local emergency coordination starts  
Hyogo Prefectural Government

Doctors and nurses did their best to reach their hospitals and clinics by foot or bicycle. By the time they arrived, the facilities were already full of emergency patients waiting to be treated. Even medical facilities whose buildings were not damaged had damaged medical equipment. Furthermore, their electricity, gas and water were cut and X-ray machines could not be used. Also, many medicines were lost.

Overwhelmed by the number of serious injuries, doctors and nurses did not have any time to switch on the radio or TV. As residents of Kobe, they also recognized Kobe as a low seismic-risk area. Many believed that the damage in Osaka must have been more serious and that they could not count on medical facilities there to accept their patients. They could not find their emergency contact manuals to check telephone numbers. Some thought of calling their colleagues in Osaka and Kyoto to ask for help, but telephone lines were congested.

#### **D. Initial Local Emergency Coordination**

Both the Kobe Municipal Office and Hyogo Prefectural Government were located in the center of Kobe, where seismic intensity had been at the maximum (estimated at VII on the JMA scale), and had suffered structural damage. One floor of the old building of the Kobe Municipal Office was crushed. Unfortunately, this was the floor where the Kobe City Water Service Department was located. The Hyogo Prefectural Government Office building also suffered some damage, and the electricity supply was cut. The building had an independent emergency generator, which worked for two hours but then failed because of a shortage of radiator water. Even when buildings were able to withstand the ground motion, the inside was a total mess. Office furniture had toppled over, files were scattered and telephones and fax machines had fallen down. Responsible officers were also affected. The Mayor of Kobe reached his office at 6:30 a.m. The Vice-Governor of Hyogo Prefecture arrived at 6:45 a.m. There they found some of their staff - who were lucky enough to escape the worst effects of the quake and could reach the office quickly on foot - trying to initiate local coordination, picking up telephone sets and pulling emergency manuals out of toppled cabinets. The Hyogo Prefectural Government Office is the focal point in the local emergency response mechanism; but, of 3,200 workers, fewer than 20% were able to report to the office by noon on 17 January. These workers also had to crawl out of bed over shattered glass, find their way out the door, rescue their families and neighbors as necessary and then find their way to the office.

The emergency radio telephone network of Hyogo Prefecture did not function because the controller computer was damaged and the normal telephone lines were congested. So, they sent messengers on foot to police headquarters and the fire command to obtain information. But neither office had an overall picture. Their information-gathering mechanisms were paralyzed since the officers dispatched were immediately engaged in rescue operations and could not report back. The first damage figure that the Hyogo Prefectural Police Headquarters was able to gather at 9:20 a.m. was "8 dead, more than 189 buried alive, 33 missing and 203 houses destroyed," far below the actual scale of the disaster.

## **E. Initial National Response**

At 6:07 a.m. the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) informed the Disaster Prevention Bureau of the National Land Agency (DPB-NLA) (the emergency coordinating office of the national government) of the strong seismic intensity V observed at Kyoto. At 6:21 a.m. JMA reported to DPB-NLA a seismic intensity of VI on the JMA scale (9-10 on the Mercalli Scale) registered at Kobe. In Japan, the national emergency response mechanism starts whenever there is a report of seismic intensity of more than V. DPB-NLA called the National Police Agency (NPA) and National Fire Defense Agency (NFA) for a report on human casualties. Neither had reports from local authorities since neither the local police nor the fire department had any information. At 7:00 a.m. the NHK (public broadcasting corporation) began showing footage of affected areas. At 7:30 a.m. the DPB-NLA decided to convene a National Emergency Headquarters meeting. Emergency offices in Tokyo kept monitoring aerial footage shown by NHK, saw that the magnitude of damage was extraordinary and felt that it was beyond local response capacity. At 8:30 a.m. the NPA alerted prefectural police headquarters of non-affected areas to be on stand-by for assistance. At 9:00 a.m. the NFA did the same for fire commands. But still there were no damage reports from local authorities and no request from local authorities to mobilize nationwide assistance. At 9:05 a.m. the DPB-NLA officer was able to make telephone contact with a senior official of Hyogo Prefecture, urging them to send an immediate request to the National Self-Defense Forces (SDF) Headquarters for organized assistance by troops. SDF troops stationed near affected areas had already started on-site rescue and their helicopters had already taken off for reconnaissance activities. However, to mobilize full-scale assistance, the Governor of Hyogo had to communicate an official request and this had not been done. At 9:30 a.m. the NPA reported 22 confirmed dead to the DPB-NLA. At 10:00 a.m. a request from the Governor was finally transmitted.