



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster Captured in 3D

Overview

For over 20 years, NHK Media Technology, Inc. (NHK MT) has been in the forefront of developing 3D technology, producing a great number of 3D programs in the process. After the recent unprecedented earthquake and tsunami disasters hit Japan, NHK MT documented the terrible destruction in the disaster-hit areas utilizing the 3D technology we have developed. "We felt it was our duty to keep a record for posterity," said NHK MT president Hirokazu Nishiyama. "We hope it will be of help in the reconstruction efforts and the prevention of similar disasters in the future.

With this in mind, we dispatched a three-person reporting crew comprising a cameraman, stereographer (3D image coordinator), and a field producer to Iwate and Miyagi prefectures in northeastern Japan for one week in early April. The crew selected seven hard-hit areas as the focus of their reporting. They recorded some two hours and 30 minutes of footage. The resulting video, "3D - The Great East Japan Earthquake" was based on this footage. We hope that this video record will be widely used by disaster prevention planners and at educational facilities and elsewhere to alert the public to the need for prevention measures.

Data on the disaster, such as the numbers of those killed or missing, the situation in the disaster areas, and details of recovery and reconstruction efforts continue to change from day to day. This video is based on the situation that existed while the crew was in the disaster areas. We believe that this approach will help future viewers to understand clearly what the situation was like one month after the massive earthquake and tsunami struck.

In addition, we have produced an English version of the video to acquaint overseas audiences with the true dimensions of the disaster. We have been invited to show the video at this year's "Sunny Side of the Doc, the International Documentary Market" from June 21 in La Rochelle, France. At this event, we will also participate in a "3D panel discussion" to explain the situation in the disaster areas.

Last year, we took on a wide range of 3D projects, including: live 3D broadcasts of performances featuring Japan's most popular pop singer Kumi Koda, Japanese girl pop group Morning Musume, and other artists; 3D broadcasts of pro soccer games, pro baseball games, and other sporting events; and 3D recordings of dramas and nature and travel programs. Our work on the earthquake disaster this time was our first foray into what can be called the "3D reportage" genre. We want to further contribute to the development of the 3D industry by expanding 3D production beyond sports and entertainment.

NHK MT is also committed to continuing our 3D reporting on the areas devastated by the recent disasters, including the victims' road to recovery.

Report target areas

Taro District, Miyako City

Here, double seawalls — called the “Great Wall” — extended some 2.4 kilometers, rising up to ten meters. Residents thought these defenses would protect the town, but the tsunami swept over them.

Rikuzentakata City

This city of over 20,000 residents was destroyed by the tsunami. Of the 70,000 pine trees that once stood in the Takata Matsubara forest, one of Japan’s most famous scenic beauty spots, all were destroyed except for a lone “miracle” pine.

Kesennuma City

This was one of Japan’s foremost fishing ports. The impact of the devastation here on the fishing and fishing boat industries is immeasurable. On the night of the earthquake and tsunami disaster, much of the city’s Shishiori district was engulfed in flames. Many fishing vessels, including a 50-meter-long round-haul-net fishing boat, were lifted up and carried far inland.

Minami Sanriku Town

Drawing lessons from the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake, this town of 18,000 constructed a disaster prevention office. A young female town employee would not leave her post there. Using the town’s PA system, she continued urging residents to evacuate right up until the tsunami swamped the building.

Okawa Elementary School, Ishinomaki City

Of the 108 students at this elementary school located next to the Kitakami River, 74 were either killed or went missing when the tsunami hit. On the very day the reporting crew visited the school, exactly one month after the earthquake, Self-Defense Forces personnel were scooping out rubble from collapsed classrooms in a continuing search for the missing students.

Nobiru, Higashi-Matsuyama City

A Senseki Line train bound for Aobadori Station in Sendai City was derailed by the tsunami and turned into a twisted wreck.

Sendai Plain, Wakabayashi District, Sendai City

This noted rice-producing region in Miyagi Prefecture once produced premium Sasanishiki and Hitomebore rice. But rice cultivation will be hampered for years to come due to severe salt damage to the soil caused by the flooding. The tsunami destroyed the five-meter-high seawall and the protective inland pine forest. Only the foundations of houses remain in the residential district.

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