

Support Force Totaling 60,000 People Assembled from Throughout Japan Concerted Effort by City Gas Industry Achieves Rapid Restoration of Services

On July 16, 2007, an earthquake measuring up to “6-upper” on the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) seismic intensity scale struck the Chuetsu region of Niigata Prefecture. Since the Kashiwazaki City and Kariwa Village areas supplied by the Kashiwazaki Gas and Waterworks Department suffered severe damage, gas supply was immediately halted to some 32,000 customers (the Kyoto University Disaster Prevention Research Institute later reported that the earthquake in this area was equivalent to a 7 on the JMA scale).

Meanwhile, virtually no damage occurred in areas covered by other gas utilities – including those suffering tremors measuring “6-upper.”

Nowhere in the entire region did secondary hazards such as fires caused by gas leaks occur. This is thought to be the result of more widespread use of PE pipes and intelligent gas meters.

In response to a request from the Kashiwazaki Gas and Waterworks Department, the Japan Gas Association (JGA) immediately dispatched a support force of 1,000 people with the aim of restoring services as quickly as possible. The force was progressively augmented, reaching a maximum of approximately 2,500. Services were restored using systems involving a total of more than 60,000 people from 29 gas utilities.

Restoration work was hampered by damage to roads and houses, and by water and mud that had entered gas pipes. However, by August 10 services had been resumed to all areas except those where work was complicated by damage to roads and houses, and by August 27 services had been completely restored.

To help reduce the inconvenience to customers during the period until services were restored, gas utilities nationwide supplied 9,300 portable stoves with 29,500 gas cylinders. Mobile gas generators were gathered from throughout the country, and a total of 17 such units were deployed, chiefly in hospitals and welfare facilities. The use of mobile gas generators outside the area covered by the utilities that owns them was formerly restricted by various regulations, and it was difficult to use them in another gas utilities supply area.

However, due to deregulation efforts by the Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry (METI) and the cooperation of Niigata Prefecture, the use of such generators was achieved for the first time in the aftermath of this earthquake.

This restoration work was successfully completed with the understanding and cooperation of customers and the various organizations involved. Using this experience, efforts to further advance existing earthquake countermeasures have begun in The Niigata Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake Gas Countermeasures Study Group, which is organized by METI with the participation of the JGA.