

A Study of the Toya-Usu Volcano Meister System 10 years

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Summary

1. There is a system of disaster prevention lead by citizens in the Mt. Usu area of Japan. This system is called the “**Toya Caldera and Usu Volcano Meister System**”.
2. We Volcano Meisters are active in various areas. For the next eruption of Mt. Usu, we strive to improve the disaster prevention awareness of citizens.
3. On the other hand, after 10 years since this system is started, several problems have presented themselves. We have set up several workgroups to solve these problems. We have initiated the second stage.

What’s “Volcano Meister System”?

This system began in 2008 by the Iburi local promotion bureau in accordance with the Hokkaido government. Up to this point, 48 people living around Mt. Usu have been certified as Volcano Meisters (Fig.1). This system develops sustainable human resources for learning and sharing information about volcano disaster prevention. There is a training course and certification examination for local people through this system. We Volcano Meisters must become local leaders for disaster mitigation when the volcano erupts.

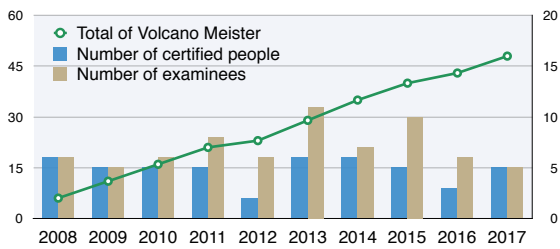


Fig.1 Number of V.M certified each year

Volcano Meister’s profile

Those certified as Volcano Meisters have various occupations. (Fig.2). “Group staff” contains staff of the tourist association, union members, corporate officials, etc. Interestingly, there are also three parent and child pairs.

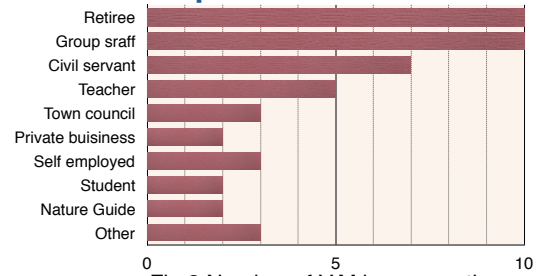


Fig.2 Number of V.M by occupation (Certification time)

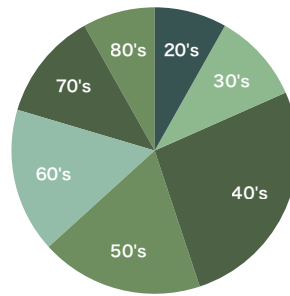


Fig.3 Number of V.M by generation (Now)

In Japan, such qualifications are often taken up by elderly people. 1/3 of the people who have obtained the Volcano Meister certification are over 60 years old. However, it is noteworthy that among those who are between 30 and 50 years of age, more than half are employed in other fields. (Fig.3). This is very encouraging given the next eruption.

Workgroups to face some problems

Training

Many of us do not have enough knowledge about volcanology. So, we invite scientists, learning about volcanoes and geology through lectures and field learning.



Fig.4 Field study on V.M Training Course

Guide

We also have outdoor guides. We hold workshops training guides so that they themselves may be knowledgeable in risk management, etc.



Fig.5 Workshop about Guide skills

Tourism

Lake Toya is abundant in beautiful scenery as a result of volcanic activity. As such, we are trying to discover new geo-sites and propose new tours to the area.



Fig.6 Exploring geosites on the lake

Education

We have considered providing disaster prevention education programs at school. To do so, we have been evaluating where disaster prevention might be positioned within the national curriculum.



Fig.7 Disaster prevention guide for school

Achievements and Problems

[Achievement]

The term “Volcano Meister” became widely known as a disaster educator. Therefore, Volcano Meisters came to be utilized in the disaster prevention education for many schools. Furthermore, a similar Volcano Meister system began in Nagano from this spring. Moreover, a similar system in which locals become disaster prevention leaders has been enacted by some in Costa Rica.

[Problem]

Not every Volcano Meister has equal knowledge about geology and volcanoes, as almost all Volcano Meisters are not scientists. As such, many of us cannot give specialized advice to citizens and cannot clearly answer what can be done about the next eruption. We all have to learn more about volcanoes.

We are not accredited as guides. However, there are many guide requests at the Toya-Usu UNSECO Global Geopark. Is the information presented by our guides correct? Most importantly, are our guides conducted safely? We all need to raise our guide skills more.