



## Private Helicopters for Access to Medical Care in Depopulated Areas

**5.8 million** — This is the number of times ambulances are dispatched in Japan each year (source: Fire and Disaster Management Agency, 2012). With an aging population, demand for ambulances are expected to grow as the number of elderly who suddenly become ill or suffer from falls will increase.

The shortage of doctors has been identified as a social problem for some time and this still remains. Other insufficiencies of the existing medical institutions are also emerging. Hospital shutdowns and shortening of operation hours of emergency medical facilities are increasing. Lack of medical facilities that can accept emergency cases and the delay of ambulance arrival at emergency locations are other problems that have been pointed out recently. As a result, lives that should have been saved were lost causing unnecessary tragedies.

Emergency medical care services by helicopters have lately drawn attention as a solution to the problems outlined above. “Doctor Heli” is an emergency helicopter medical service which operates using hospitals as bases with doctors specializing in emergency medicine and nurses available inflight to perform medical treatments. This system was established in 1995 after the Hanshin Awaji Great Earthquake. 41 helicopters are stationed at 35 locations all over Japan as of the end of May 2013. In addition, disaster

prevention and emergency helicopters operated by fire-fighting departments in major cities, local governments and the National Fire and Disaster Management Agency can also be tapped on under this system.

With the public sector using more helicopters for emergency operations nationwide, a similar movement to make use of the mobility of helicopters in emergency situations is also emerging in the civil sector. Examples of civil medical helicopter services include the “MESH Support” run by a nonprofit organization in Okinawa Prefecture, the “White Bird” found by a medical care foundation, Chiyukai in Fukuoka Prefecture, and “NIMAS” in the offshore islands in Nagasaki Prefecture. These helicopters fill in the service gaps of the public “Doctor Heli” system by transporting patients to medical institutions in non-emergency situations and dispatching doctors.

The shortage in medical services has worsened in the Tohoku area of northeastern Japan which had suffered greatly under the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. Under such circumstances, work is proceeding on a project to employ private helicopters to carry patients for emergency care.

In this Monthly Report, we feature the “Wings for Life Project—Emergency transport services by helicopters” .

# All Round Helicopter (ARH) Starts Full-scale Operations on October 23!

## Monthly Topics

Civic Force selects hot topics among various projects of this month.

### Progress of ARH "Multi-purpose Medical Helicopter Services"

[Year 2013]

March: Held seminars with Kesennuma municipal office and medical institutions (held as needed)

April: Held meetings to explain the project to residents of 3 community associations and 3 temporary housings located near the vicinity of the helicopter parking apron Helicopter flight demonstration and discussions

June: Conclusion of agreement between Kesennuma City (Miyagi Prefecture), ARH and Civic Force. This project was selected as "a project that promotes interregional cooperation among geographically broad areas" by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

September: Conclusion of agreement among Minami-sanriku Town (Miyagi Prefecture), ARH and Civic Force regarding the utilization of helicopters

Emergency dispatch on request from a hospital in Iwate Prefecture

Execution of emergency drill by Civic Force together with the International Medical and Welfare College (fourth drill).

Conclusion of agreement with Ishinomaki Red Cross Hospital

"When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, I flew the helicopter simply because I wanted to do whatever I could to help others. That is what this project is based on," said Mr. Masayuki Takahashi, representative director and pilot of ARH, as he explained the reason for launching a medical helicopter service in disaster-affected areas. On Oct. 7, ARH started the trial operation of "multi-purpose medical helicopters" in Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture.

Civic Force, in cooperation with ARH, implements the "Wings for Life Project – emergency medical transportation service by helicopters", which is one of its Mid-to Long-term Reconstruction Project. This project provides multi-purpose medical helicopter services to complement the existing emergency transportation services in Kesennuma City and its vicinity where people have difficulties reaching advanced medical institutions and where further shortage of hospitals and practitioners became apparent especially after the disaster. By utilizing our network that has been developed since the disaster, we started preparing for this project in the summer of 2012 and spent a year offering medical institutions for their cooperation, coordinating with relevant organizations, preparing aircrafts and heliports and holding orientations for neighboring residents. Finally, we managed to station pilots and mechanics at our base heliport in the Akaiwa district of Kesennuma City and started "trial operations" to meet the needs of medical institutions.

During the two-week trial period, we will transfer patients, doctors and medical equipment and instruments upon request from partner institutions such as the Ishinomaki Red Cross Hospital. We will establish a safe operation system and cooperate with more institutions at full operation.



A launching ceremony will take place on Oct. 23 at the ARH heliport in Akaiwa district.

## Q&A

### FAQs on ARH Helicopter Operation

Q. Can anyone make requests for the helicopter service?

A. Only medical practitioners can make requests for helicopter services in emergency situations. When you feel the need for emergency medical care, please visit a medical institution.

Q. What are your service hours?

A. Service is available between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily. However, it may vary according to sunset time and weather conditions.

Q. What is your coverage area and to which medical institutions can you transfer patients?

A. The helicopter can travel approximately 700km without fuel supply and the coverage area is within a 300 kilometer-radius of Kesennuma City in Miyagi Prefecture, where the ARH helicopter

Q. How many people can the helicopter carry?

A. Maximum six people. However, only four people, including patients, doctors and a pilot, can be accommodated when boarding with a stretcher.

Q. What are the differences between your services and the public helicopter services such as "Doctor Heli"?

A. "Doctor Heli" are subsidized by national or local governments which send doctor(s) to emergency sites to provide initial treatment to patient(s) in critical conditions. Therefore, this service is not available for patients whose lives are not in danger. ARH is run by the private sector so we can transport any patient as well as take recovered patients to local hospitals.

Q. How much does it cost?

A. No cost for patients. The initial cost for the project is covered by subsidies and NPO such as Civic Force. Moving forward, the project will be funded by donations and subsidies.

# Determined to Save One More Life

I previously worked as an Emergency Medical Technician at a fire department in Shizuoka Prefecture. Night and day I rushed to the site to give emergency medical treatment to patients. After the Great East Japan Earthquake, I joined the TMAT, an NPO for disaster medical care. I assisted physicians at the evacuation center in Minamisanriku Town, Miyagi Prefecture and coordinated patient transport activities with medical institutions. Through these activities, I reaffirmed that there are so many people who worry about medical care in remote areas where there are only a few hospitals.



## Face to Face

Civic Force is supported by various companies, NPOs and government. This corner features the latest messages from our partners.

Mr. Keisuke Watanabe,  
Operation Manager,  
All Round Helicopter

While there are two emergency medical service helicopters operating in Shizuoka, there are none in Miyagi. Moreover, there are only a few medical institutions in Kesennuma City. It takes two hours by car to go to a hospital in Sendai City to receive advanced medical care, which is too much of a burden for patients. I believe that everyone should be able to receive the same medical services all across Japan. As I was getting interested in the problem of lack of medical services in the affected areas, I learned about the scheme for All Round Helicopter. So I decided to move to Kesennuma City to help the affected areas with my experience.

It takes much time and effort for a private organization to launch a full-scale helicopter service in coordination with concerned agencies. When I explained about this service to the residents and conducted trial helicopter boarding events, I received many comments such as: "I want to see the helicopters of All Round Helicopter flying in Kesennuma soon," or "I will rely on the helicopters in emergency situations."

I want to be always true to "saving people's lives" and would like to keep doing whatever I can without losing sight of the basics of medical care in the field.

## What we are doing in Tohoku NOW

### Mid- to Long-Term Reconstruction Projects

#### Mid- to Long-Term Reconstruction Projects

Civic Force has been running several "Mid- to Long-Term Reconstruction Projects" since the summer of 2012, in order to tackle the challenges that were identified in the disaster areas during the support activities we conducted for roughly one and a half years.

- Tourism Revitalization Project
  - Enhancing cooperation between the public and private sectors to make Kesennuma "an attractive city for tourists"—
  
- Community Revive Project
  - Supporting local communities in creating and reconstructing homes and jobs —



- Dream Support Project
  - Supporting local youths through scholarships and locally-developed educational programs —



- Green Circle Project
  - Developing a sustainable forest industry and effective utilization of woody biomass —

- Wings for Life Project
  - Supporting helicopter transport service for emergency medical purposes —

See page 2 for more information.

### Brief Report on Our NPO

We have been supporting projects that are run by the disaster victims for the reconstruction of their local communities. Since April 2011, Civic Force has supported 37 organizations and 49 projects. As of October 2013, we are supporting five projects. <http://www.civic-force.org/emergency/higashinon/po/> •Platform for Creation of Ria Coast Tourism × Civic Force: Embodying the strategy of tourism in Kesennuma city, the organization leads pilot projects.

•nina Jinseki Kogen × Civic Force: The organization encourages evacuees from Fukushima prefecture to relocate to Hiroshima Prefecture and supports them to sustain their community in the new environment.

•Network Orange × Civic Force

The organization has monthly workshops to prepare for the "Tohoku Marche®," which is scheduled to be held in October.

•Mori wa Umi no Koibito × Civic Force

The project promotes environmental education to review how human beings can coexist with nature.

•Kesennuma Future Plan Osawa Team × Civic Force

Specialists in the fields of urban design and architecture support group relocation and reconstruction projects.

What we are  
doing in Tohoku  
**NOW**

## Aid for the Typhoon Damage in the Philippines

In the middle of August, Typhoon Utor caused large-scale flooding in the Philippines, which is called the “Philippines Flood Damage.” As a member of Asia Pacific Alliance, Civic Force distributed emergency relief supplies to 2,600 households in the disaster area in cooperation with CDRC, our partner NGO in the Philippines who launched aid activities in the area immediately following the disaster.

This project was implemented with the financial assistance of Japan Platform. Your donation to support the Philippines is being used for the aid activities of CDRC which are still continuing in the area. Thank you very much for your support.



## Preparing for the Tohoku Marche™

Civic Force is supporting “The Third Tohoku Marche™” in cooperation with L’ Occitane, as part of our projects for the Great East Japan Earthquake. This Marche, organized by Network Orange, will be held at Higashishinjo-Oki Park in Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture on October 19, together with the “Entrepreneur Contest.” The winner of the Contest will get a chance to open a shop in France next spring.



## Report on the Activities in Affected Areas

Civic Force has been holding lectures in various regions to report about our aid activities in affected areas and our disaster prevention activities. We co-sponsored a fund-raising seminar “311 and Reconstruction and Disaster Prevention in the future” with TASUKEAI (help-each-other) Japan on September 18, 2013. On September 24th, our Executive Director Ms. Kaori Neki spoke as a panelist at the “Social Good Summit” organized by UNDP Tokyo Office.

## Start your support with only 33 yen per day



We must be ready for the “next one”. Donate a fixed amount each month in units 1,000 yen to be a monthly supporter and you can participate in activities to prepare for a large scale disaster. Payment can be made through a bank transfer to Civic Force. Our account numbers are as follows:

- Bank: Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, Aoyama Branch, savings account No. 6953964
- JP Bank : 00140-6-361805
- Credit card: Please check the “Donate Now!” section on the Civic Force website. [https://bokinchan2.com/civicforce/donation/bokin/page1.php?bokin\\_type=donation](https://bokinchan2.com/civicforce/donation/bokin/page1.php?bokin_type=donation)

The following page provides our Monthly Report which comes out around 11th of each month.

### A Message from Disaster

Two years and seven months have passed since Civic Force started activities to support reconstruction in disaster-hit areas of northeastern Japan. This section showcases the people who live in the affected areas and continue positive efforts towards recovery. As the 8th person, we interviewed Mr. Hisao Murakami, the owner of “Rakusho”, a Japanese-style pub called “izakaya”, in Sendai city.



Rikuzen-haranomachi Station is the third stop from Sendai Station on the Senseki railway line and after walking 30 seconds, you’ll reach “Rakusho”, the izakaya I run. My hometown is Kesennuma city, so I offer local food of the Kesennuma region. Some of my customers are from Kesennuma city. When the disaster occurred, the inside of my shop became a mess because of the strong earthquake. But my main concern was my friends in my hometown who were affected by the tsunami. So for two months after the disaster, I kept my izakaya closed to deliver goods and prepare meals while traveling back and forth between Sendai and Kesennuma.

Thanks to the network of my former teammates from the Morioka Chuo High School baseball team, many people including professional baseball players of Rakuten

Rakuten Eagles visited to cheer us up. I was also engaged in activities such as holding baseball lessons by professional baseball players and inviting residents of temporary housings to baseball games. Because of the disaster, I gained new acquaintances who came to support us from all over the country including Shizuoka prefecture. While I wished to respond to their warm feelings, there were moments when I also felt people are becoming disconnected from each other due to the disaster.

The recommendations at my izakaya are fresh seafood, Kesennuma-style barbecued pork offal, and local food such as “azara”. I want this shop to be a place where people gather to have a cheerful time and feel positive. I am hoping to open an izakaya in Kesennuma city as well.