# Records of Other Disasters

Disaster Record 6

## 1 1953 Great Shirakawa River Flood

Plaza in front of Kumamoto City Hall (Provided by: Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun)

Starting in early June 1953, the Aso region, which accounts for about 80% of the Shirakawa River basin, experienced frequent heavy rains. Due to this prolonged rain, the ground in the Aso region became saturated. On June 26, heavy rainfall of 411.9mm in 24 hours caused the Shirakawa River to swell rapidly and flood downtown Kumamoto City.
Of the 17 bridges in Kumamoto City, 15 were washed away (only the Choroku and Taiko Bridges remained), and the flooding left the downtown area covered in a layer of mud mixed with volcanic ash from Mt. Aso. The scale of the damage was incredible, leaving over 2,000 dead and injured and many homes destroyed.

Dead/missing: 563

Contemporary newspaper article (June 30, 1953, Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun Morning Edition)

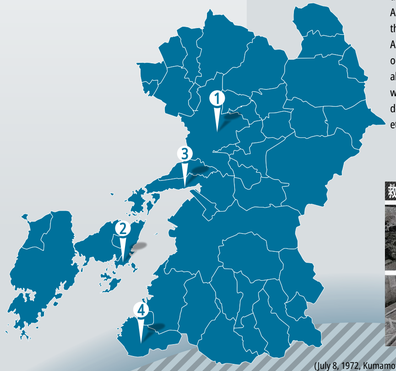
### Casualties

| | |
|---|---|
| Dead/missing | 563 |
| Injured | Over 1,500 |

### Residential damage

| | |
|---|---|
| Complete destruction | 1,855 |
| Partial destruction | 6,512 |
| Partial damage | 3,894 |
| Above-floor flooding | 48,987 |
| Below-floor flooding | 39,066 |

## 2 1972 Great Kamiamakusa Floods




From July 3 to 13, 1972, in Ryugatake, Amakusa County (now Kamiamakusa), a record rainfall of 137mm/h and a total rainfall of 526mm were recorded as a result of heavy precipitation from the 3 to the 6. Large-scale landslides occurred in the former towns of Himedo, Amakusa County (now Kamiamakusa), Ryugatake, and Kuratake (now Amakusa City), with the rains causing significant damage mainly in Kumamoto Prefecture.
Amakusa's Kamishima was hit particularly hard due to most of the area being mountainous, with many slopes and urban areas and settlements scattered in the narrow flatlands along the coast at the foot of the mountains. In some places, entire settlements, together with boulders several meters in size, were swallowed up by landslides. The number of dead and missing was 115 in Kamishima alone, with another 8 from Uki, the Kuma region, etc. Total damage exceeded ¥48 billion.

Landslide in Himedo, former Amakusa County (Provided by: Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun)

Contemporary newspaper article (July 8, 1972, Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun Morning Edition)

Dead/missing: 123

### Casualties

| | |
|---|---|
| Dead/missing | 123 |
| Seriously injured | 98 |
| Minor injuries | 213 |

### Residential damage

| | |
|---|---|
| Complete destruction | 577 |
| Partial destruction | 396 |
| Partial damage | 871 |
| Above-floor flooding | 7,297 |
| Below-floor flooding | 30,286 |

## 3 1999 Typhoon Bart (#18)

From September 23 to 24, 1999, Typhoon No. 18 (Typhoon Bart) hit Kumamoto. In Ushibuka, wind speeds of 66.2m per second were recorded, which was the fastest maximum instantaneous wind speed in observation history. The storm ravaged Kumamoto.
The atmospheric pressure drop (950hPa) from the typhoon raised the sea level along the Shiranui Sea by about 40cm. This, plus the added effect of strong winds coinciding with the time of high spring tide (8:09 AM), resulted in a sea level that was 3.5m higher than usual. In the Matsuai district, located at the inner bay of the former town of Shiranui (now Uki), 12 people died due to the storm surge that rapidly flooded the low-lying areas with seawater. In addition to the human toll of 331 deaths and injuries throughout the prefecture, a large number of homes were damaged, coupled with massive damages amounting to approximately ¥123.4 billion, mainly to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and civil engineering facilities.

Deaths: 16

Contemporary newspaper article (September 25, 1999, Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun Morning Edition)

### Casualties

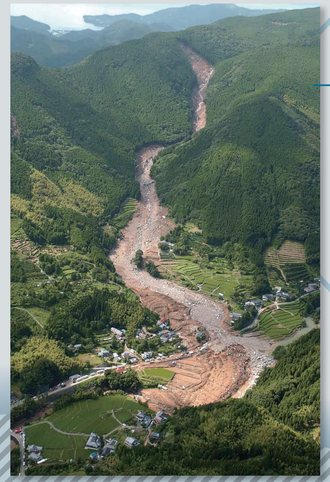
| | |
|---|---|
| Deaths | 16 |
| Seriously injured | 26 |
| Minor injuries | 289 |

### Residential damage

| | |
|---|---|
| Complete destruction | 145 |
| Partial destruction | 1,673 |
| Partial damage | 60,032 |
| Above-floor flooding | 884 |
| Below-floor flooding | 1,041 |

Flooding due to high tide in Matsuai district of former town of Shiranui (Provided by: Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun)

## 4 2003 Minamata Heavy Rain Disaster



Landslide in Hogawachi, Minamata (Provided by: Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun)

From July 18 to 20, 2003, warm, moist air flowed in a "tongue"-like shape from the southwestern sea of Kyushu towards a stationary rainy season front in the Tsushima Strait in northern Kyushu (a phenomenon called a "wet tongue"), bringing local severe rain to various parts of Kyushu.
In the early morning of July 20, 2003, the Fukagawa area of Minamata recorded 121mm of rainfall in one hour. This caused landslides in two areas—the Fukagawa Shinyashiki area and the Hogawachi Atsumari area of Minamata—resulting in 19 deaths due to houses being swept away. In addition, property damage was extensive in the southern regions of the prefecture, amounting to a total of ¥17.6 billion in damage.

Deaths: 19

Contemporary newspaper article (July 21, 2003, Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun Morning Edition)

### Casualties

| | |
|---|---|
| Deaths | 19 |
| Seriously injured | 4 |
| Minor injuries | 3 |

### Residential damage

| | |
|---|---|
| Complete destruction | 20 |
| Partial destruction | 5 |
| Partial damage | 6 |
| Above-floor flooding | 149 |
| Below-floor flooding | 354 |