

The activities of Izu Oshima Geopark after the eruption of Ontake-san

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The eruption disaster of Ontake-san last year was a shocking incident for the people who live in Oshima with an active volcano. Eighty percent of the industry in Oshima is tourism and the most important tourist attraction is the crater of Miharayama. We have to think how we can cope with both the safety of tourists and tourism.

If we don't travel near the crater, it will be safer. However, it doesn't mean that we can learn what a volcano is and how we can live with it. The possibility of an eruption from the top of the mountain is still high. We also have the same possibility from other places on the mountain. If we only think about safety, it means we have to give up life on this island.

Thirteen days after the eruption of Ontake-san, we posted a notice at the entrance to the crater. It said "How to keep us safe from an unexpected eruption". Furthermore, we started to lend helmets to tourists free of charge. All tour guides have started to explain how to keep everyone safe. They have always carried a helmet with them during the tour.

Izu Oshima has one of the most developed observation systems of a volcano in Japan. We have one hundred and fifty (150) volcano observation machines in a ninety-one (91) square kilometer area. This means that we can get more detailed information about the mountain, which will reduce the danger of an eruption. On the other hand, we should not forget that it is not completely safe to climb up to the volcano or to live on an island with an active volcano.

The administration of Oshima and members of the Japan Meteorological Agency in Oshima recognize the risk. This is the one of the biggest reasons why the notice was posted and the rental of the helmets free of charge was brought to fruition. This is one of the results of the work of at the Geopark, which has researched the volcano and disaster prevention.

We should know more about volcanoes. It is very important for us to protect ourselves from disasters like an eruption. This is well known to the people on Oshima through work at the Geopark.

As workers at the Geopark, we have learned about past disasters from specialists of volcanology and members of the Japan Meteorological Agency in Oshima. After the eruption disaster of Ontake-san, we thought it became much more important to learn what is happening on the mountain at this time. We invited Prof. Morita of the Earthquake Research Institute at the University of Tokyo, and had lectures twice.

This is a report about the work of Geopark including some opinions, which were given by the participants after the lecture.

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