

# Hitchhike adventures since the March 11th earthquake



Mrs. Ayami who took me from Hirosaki to Namioka city in Aomori Prefecture on July 9th.

I haven't felt it appropriate to write about my adventures meeting people hitchhiking in Japan since the catastrophe of March 11th. People are still suffering and I want to do what I can to help those who are going directly to the disaster areas to treat people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

This is just to say I'm still hitchhiking, people still pick me up, and I still need to travel this way to do my job and save money at the same time. Since March 11th I hitchhiked 22 days in 75 vehicles and traveled 6400 kilometers. Some of the people I've met have been directly involved in the relief efforts. One man came from as far as Sasebo city in Kyushu to Soma city in Fukushima.

On July 11th I passed through Fukushima city on the Tohoku Expressway. Radiation levels in Fukushima city are higher than other places in Fukushima Prefecture where people are still allowed to live, even higher than in Soma city which is 20 kilometers closer to the damaged nuclear power-plants. This is because the wind happened to be blowing toward Fukushima city when one of the plants had a chemical explosion. The no-go zone is a 20 kilometer radius around the powerplants. The inhabitants of that area have not only lost their homes and land, but any livestock and crops they happened to have.

Merely passing through Fukushima city presents no danger from radiation. The Fukushima city people have not been reporting any radiation sickness. So far not a single person has died from radiation, not even the ones who worked close to the plant to cool down the reactors. For this reason IMHO I consider comments from so called "experts" that Fukushima is far worse than Chernobyl

to be nothing but hype and fear mongering! According to [world-nuclear.org](http://world-nuclear.org) 30 operators and firemen died within three months since the Chernobyl accident. It's now been four months since the Fukushima powerplant meltdown, and **not one power plant worker has died** or is even ill from radiation!

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## Government and banking institutions' mistrust of aid collectors since the East Japan Earthquake



A couple days after the massive magnitude 9 earthquake in the Pacific 70 kilometres (43 mi) east of the Oshika Peninsula of Northeast Japan which caused a massive tsunami destroying the northeast coast of the Tohoku region, I was asked to make a website <http://helpjapan2011.net> for the purpose of raising aid to buy goods and materials for volunteers to take to the survivors of the disaster.

At the time, NPO Leap High 28's Paypal account was under investigation by Paypal administrator's to verify its NPO status. Because of this, account was unable to accept donations. To work around the problem, I used instead my own Paypal account as a temporary substitute.

Within the first week a number of friends sent close to \$500 US to my Paypal account. Shortly afterward, Paypal sent me a message saying that I was using my Paypal account for business purposes and asked me to answer a set of questions. I believed I answered all the questions honestly and explained that none of my web sites with a Paypal donation button are offering anything for sale. I was merely asking donations for my missionary work, and since the March 11th earthquake, specifically for suppose of aid toward the earthquake and tsunami victims.

This seemed to satisfy Paypal and the matter appeared to be settled, but after a week suddenly and **without warning, Paypal froze my account!** This meant I could not use it to receive further donations or pay out from it. Thankfully by that time I withdrew all of the donations received for the earthquake victims and sent them on to the NPO. Only \$100 of the money I

previously had in the account is now frozen.

I personally used 10,000 yen (now \$80 US) from donations I received since the earthquake to buy vegetables and natto for a large and needy family in Sendai. That together with other donations from friends taken to the family in Sendai was nearly double than the \$500 US I received in my Paypal account.

Other Paypal users in Japan – people I know – who are working to raise aid for the tsunami victims have reported similar problems with Paypal. It makes me think that Paypal may be ultimately controlled by [the Establishment](#).

Banks have also asked prying questions about transfers of funds from overseas. One of my friends who has been doing an great work in bringing supplies to needy families in Minami Senriku received a large donation of 3.2 million yen (\$40,000 US) from a company based in the USA. The bank dragged its feet in transferring these funds to his account. He was asked by bank officials the purpose of the money. What business is it of theirs, anyway?! He said that if he told them he was selling *pornography*, they probably would have understood and accepted it better rather than saying he was using the funds to buy equipment, food and supplies for the disaster victims! It dawned on him, *“The Establishment doesn’t want me to have money! Common folks aren’t supposed to have money because that means freedom of movement from Establishment control!”*

Mr. Ikeda, the man who took me home on July 11th. from the Adatarara Service area on the Tohoku Expressway in Fukushima Prefecture reported similar problems with banking institutions and government agencies. His house in Soma City Fukushima Prefecture was somewhat damaged by the earthquake but is still in a livable condition. City Hall in general has had nothing but doubts about his motivations to help raise aid for the disaster victims. He’s had to fight every step of the way to do anything toward the cause of bringing aid.

Apparently a few unscrupulous persons have been using the March 11th. disaster as a means to fill their own pockets. As a result, all the good people trying to help have suffered. At the same time, big name charities such as the Red Cross are collecting millions of \$ without having to account for what all the money is being spent on! Talk about a mixed up world that cannot discern anymore the difference between the good guys and the bad ones.  
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**[First donation received to Palpal account for the Japan earthquake victims](#)**



I would like to thank Darryl Rollins in the USA for sending \$20 toward the relief fund. This is the first donation via Paypal from a person who saw this web site.

Darryl's donation will be part of other donations listed on Help Japan 2011 of which yours truly is the webmaster. I previously had my Paypal button on that site, but was asked to take it off because my Paypal account is not registered with the Leap High 28 NPO. They are hoping to get their own Paypal account.

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## [Visit to friends in Sendai](#)



Charles Begley before van stocked with food and goods for friends in Sendai

On March 26, Charles Begley and I drove to the city of Sendai to bring supplies to a small Christian community of 6 adults and 7 children. It was a 4 hour drive along the Banetsu and Tohoku expressways and was through Fukushima prefecture. As you see from the map, the Tohoku expressway is about 58 kilometers or 36 miles from the two troubled nuclear power-plants in Fukushima.



## Route from Niigata to Sendai

Charles' van was completely filled with supplies, thanks to friends in Niigata and a donation of money from the director of NPO Leap High 28, Yoko Ishikawa, with whom I am working with in building the Help Japan 2011 web site. In all we took approximately 80,000 yen or about \$1000 US worth of food and goods. This included 105 kg of rice, bags of white radish (daikon), potatoes, carrots, eggplant, onions, noodles, curry and stew ingredients, canned goods, 24 packs of natto, 2 camping stoves, 35 cans of can fuel for the stoves, 90 liters of kerosene for heating, clothes, blankets, and shoes. Most of these items are now hard to find or buy in Sendai, a city of one million people, the largest city of northeast Japan and the closest to the epicenter of the earthquake on March 11th in the Pacific. Some materials like clothes, shoes and blankets were not immediate needs of my friends in Sendai, but items they would distribute to others in need.



Cars lined up to get gas at the Bandaisan service area on the Banetsu expressway in Fukushima

The Tayama family was very grateful for the food and the means to cook it. They had no vegetables the past two weeks. Until a few days ago, they had no electricity. They still have no running water or gas.

## Visual impressions

Much unlike my visit to the city of Ojiya in Niigata after the October 2004 earthquake when I saw destruction in any direction I looked, I saw no destruction or damage of anything whatsoever. The roads were not broken as they were in Niigata, and no houses fell. The only sign that something had happened was many convenience stores were closed. That is not to say there was no direct destruction at all from the earthquake. One friend reports his apartment was damaged to the point of becoming unlivable which forced him to move. But the overall direct damage from the earthquake seemed to be minimal. The real destruction was caused by the tsunami along perhaps 500 kilometers of the Pacific coast, up to 10 kilometers inland. This is roughly 5000 square kilometers of devastation!

It was cold and snowy in the mountains of Fukushima, but there was no snow in Sendai and not too cold in my friend's house even without the heaters on. But it was still daytime with a clear sky. The sun helps warm the houses. The Pacific side of Japan has a much higher percentage of sunny days than the west coast along the Sea of Japan. I'm sure it does get colder at night, and all that donated kerosene will be used for heating.

We came to a point in Sendai about 14 kilometers or 8 miles from the Pacific

coast. My friend Charles did not want to purposely drive close enough to see any destruction. He said he saw enough of it on TV.

## **Photos after arriving in Sendai**



Happy recipients of goods



Mrs. Tayama with one of the three  
30 kilograms of rice donated by  
friends in Niigata



Charles with the Tayamas



Yours truly struggling to hold the  
30 kilogram bag of rice waiting for  
Charles to figure out how to use  
the camera.



The children rejoicing over the box  
of bread products donated by a  
bakery in Niigata



The Tayama family with some of the  
supplies they received.

## **Testimonials from Friends in Sendai**

Mrs. Tayama: "I work as a maid in a large hotel in Sendai. I was on the 10th floor in standing in front of the elevator when the earthquake hit. As soon as I pushed the down button to call the elevator, the building started to shake. It shook so bad I couldn't stand up without falling. I crouched down



on the floor and stayed there till the shaking stopped.”

Mr. Tayama: “The night of the earthquake we all slept with our clothes on. Tremors continued through the night. We knew we all may have to evacuate the building at any time. ”

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## Bringing supplies to friends in Sendai



Tomorrow, Saturday March 26th, Charles Begley, the director of Begley Productions and I will travel to the city of Sendai, the largest city in northeast Japan that was affected by the earthquake, to bring supplies to a large family of 4 adults and 7 children. They are sitting in a cold house wearing their winter coats for lack of kerosene for heating.

So far we have acquired,

- 4 containers of kerosene holding 18 liters each equaling 72 liters.
- 60 kilograms of rice
- Boxes of macaroni
- Vegetables such as cabbage, carrots and onions

They also requested we bring can meat, fresh meat, natou, and ingredients to make curry and stew.

It's unfortunate that we cannot bring more kerosene to this family. That 72 liters may last them only a week. But it will soon be April and warmer weather.

Sixty kilograms of rice is enough for at least two months of meals. By then it may be easier for them to buy rice locally.

The route to Sendai will take us within 57 kilometers of the nuclear power plant in trouble in Fukushima. But this is well outside the danger radius. I've heard people within 20 kilometers of the nuclear reactors have been evacuated.