

**T**he Japanese archipelago forms a country with mountains ranging north to south surrounded by ocean on all sides and with four rich seasons. Those geographical and meteorological conditions sometimes cause damage due to natural phenomena such as torrential rain, heavy snow, earthquakes and tsunamis. For example, from summer through to autumn, heavy rain due to typhoons causes flooding and landslides. And, on March 11, 2011, a huge tsunami generated by a massive earthquake in northern Japan wrought severe damage along the coastline.

To prevent or mitigate the damage from these disasters, many Japanese people take part in disaster prevention drills. Performed in schools, workplaces and elsewhere, emergency drills are a form of training for people to protect themselves in the event of a disaster such as an earthquake, tsunami or fire by walking to a designated evacuation area, using a fire extinguisher to put out a fire or performing some other task. On September 1 in particular, which has been designated "Disaster Prevention Day," large-scale disaster prevention drills take place across Japan. The day is associated with the Great Kanto Earthquake, which struck on September 1, 1923 and left more than 100,000 people dead or missing.

For example, when in-school sirens sound at schools across Japan to simulate a major earthquake hitting, students all hide under their desks to protect themselves

from objects falling from above. Then, the students don disaster prevention hoods (which are always kept at the ready) to protect their heads, and evacuate the premises.

Individual households also stock up on disaster prevention goods during normal circumstances in preparation for a disaster. For example, many people stockpile plastic bottles of water and foods which can



A lady learns how to use a fire extinguisher at a disaster prevention demonstration

# DISASTER PREVENTION DRILLS

be stored long-term and eaten without preparation, such as canned and retort-packed items, in case of disruption to the supply of water, electricity or gas.

Schoolchildren crawl underneath their desks to protect themselves from falling debris during a disaster prevention drill



REUTERS/AFCO



**1: The item pictured is used in the home to minimize damage due to an earthquake. What is it used for?**



- A:** To prevent furniture from falling over
- B:** To prevent window glass from breaking
- C:** To stop people from falling down



**2: In Japan you dial 110 to call for the police. What is the number to call for a fire truck or ambulance?**



- A:** 119
- B:** 999
- C:** 911

*See the back page for answers.*