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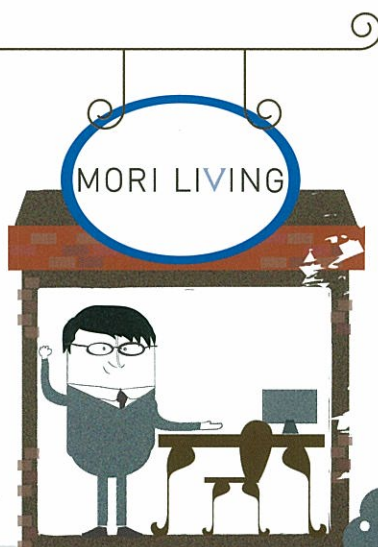
Earthquakes can be a surreal experience, and the initial reaction for most people is typically one of disbelief. But when the quake is of the severity that struck off the Tohoku coast on March 11 this year, that sense of wonder can quickly give way to an unsettling appreciation for the seismic realities of life on the Japanese archipelago.

"I was in awe, but then I started worrying," recalls Gail Lee of that powerful Friday afternoon temblor. "But within a few minutes, building management made an announcement encouraging people to stay calm."

Soon after the swaying started, fellow Tokyo American Club member Janet Stone, who also lives in Roppongi Hills Residence C, ran down 10 floors from her apartment to check on her friend. "[Hearing her voice over the intercom] was reassuring," Stone says.

According to Kazumasa Okabe, a structural engineer with Mori Building, the developer of the Roppongi Hills complex, there are a combination of factors that help residents feel safe. "We set a goal of making the Roppongi Hills Residences some of the safest residences in Japan because of structural strength, various safety measures and human support," he says. "It's not just technology, we think about people."

Both Lee and Stone were impressed when the front desk staff in their building started calling residents to make sure everyone was OK. "It was very reassuring," Stone says. "The staff are extremely service oriented."



Such practices are part of Mori Building's disaster preparedness strategy. There are also onsite wells for water, as well as food for 100,000 meals, blankets and other items, all stored in the Roppongi Hills complex. Generators safeguard against blackouts, and each apartment is provided with an emergency preparedness kit.

"Roppongi Hills has its own power plant that generates power using natural gas. In the case that the gas supply stops, Tokyo Power will supply power to Roppongi Hills through a special arrangement. And if both the gas and electricity supplies fail, we have oil reserves to burn to generate power for 72 hours," says Okabe, noting that this should be enough to last until public utilities can restore services, should they ever be knocked out in a major catastrophe.

"If you live here, you have a power supply, the buildings are

standards. Simply put, buildings that went up after 1981 are structurally safer, and all Mori residences were built after that date.

Lee, for one, says she felt safe in her home on March 11. "I could tell that the building was absorbing the shock well," she says.

Roppongi Hills Residence A features reinforced concrete, while Residences B, C and D have steel columns filled with concrete. "Plus Mori Building adds 50 percent additional strength for Residence A, so it's safer," Okabe says. "Residences B and C also feature damping devices in the walls to reduce sway. In Building D, our serviced apartments, we use base isolation and dampers."

The anti-sway systems, meanwhile, prevent damage like breaking glass or rupturing gas pipes or furniture toppling on residents. "Several items fell off shelves," Stone says, "but very little in the grand scheme

Safety in the City

structurally safe and people will help you," he adds. "Our people are trained, including for CPR, and are ready to help residents. Not many companies do this."

In its Roppongi Hills Residences, Mori uses three different measures to ensure safety: the structural integrity of the reinforced concrete and steel used in its buildings, damping devices to absorb seismic shocks and base-isolation technologies to reduce sway by detaching the entire structure from the ground.

As Okabe explains, buildings can be categorized according to whether they were built before or after 1981, when the government revised the quake-resistance guidelines in its law on construction

of things." Lee also attributes the lack of damage in her apartment to sound engineering. "Amazingly, nothing really broke," she says.

Having received guidance on how to respond in an emergency and with the power out for only a few minutes, Lee and Stone didn't feel the need to evacuate their apartment building on March 11. "I feel like the building was probably one of the safest places to be," Stone says.

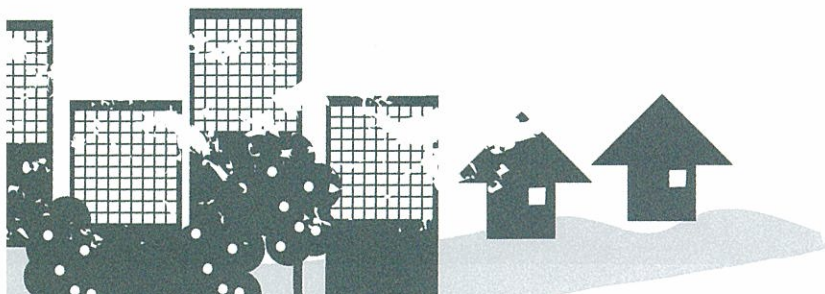
With the aftershocks from Japan's largest earthquake diminishing by the day, Lee reflects that it was Mori Building's emphasis on people and technology that provided her with peace of mind. "I was better off here emotionally because at least I was at home," she says. □



Roppongi Hills Residences are well prepared for disaster and emergency.



During the March 11 earthquake, Gail Lee says she felt safe at home in her apartment in Roppongi Hills Residence C.



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