

Japan's Legislative System and Measures Taken Against COVID-19

【Content】

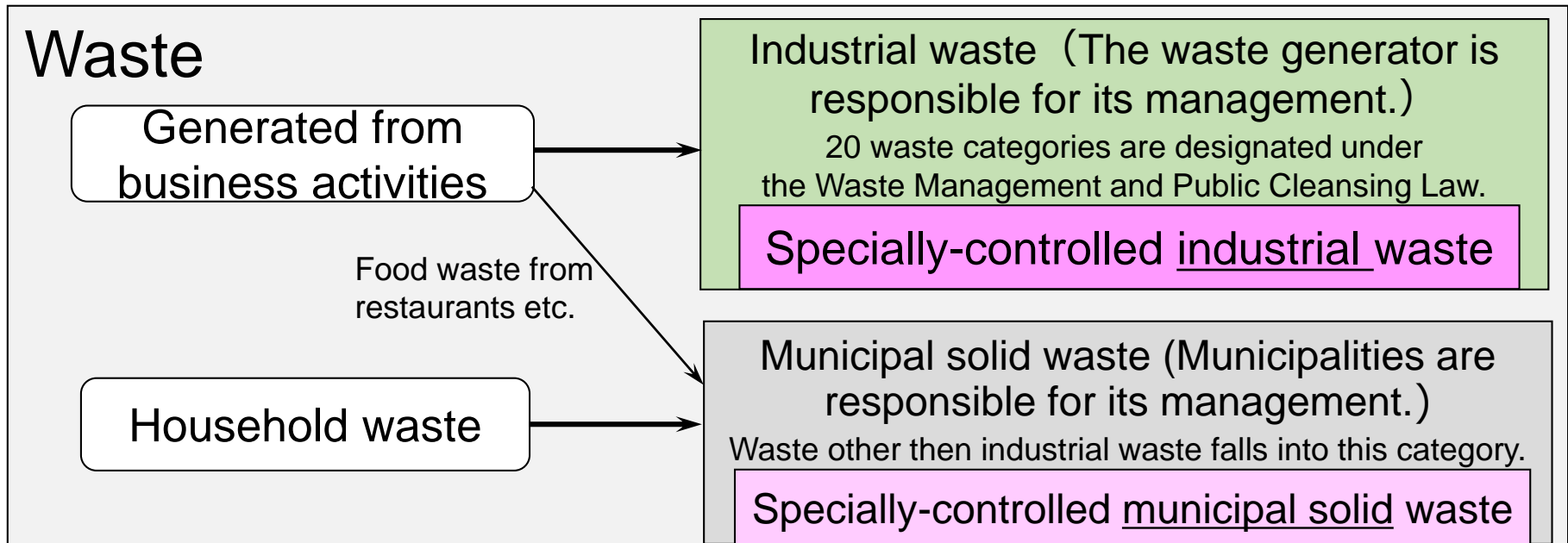
1. What is infectious waste?
2. Response to the spread of COVID-19

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1-1. Waste Categories

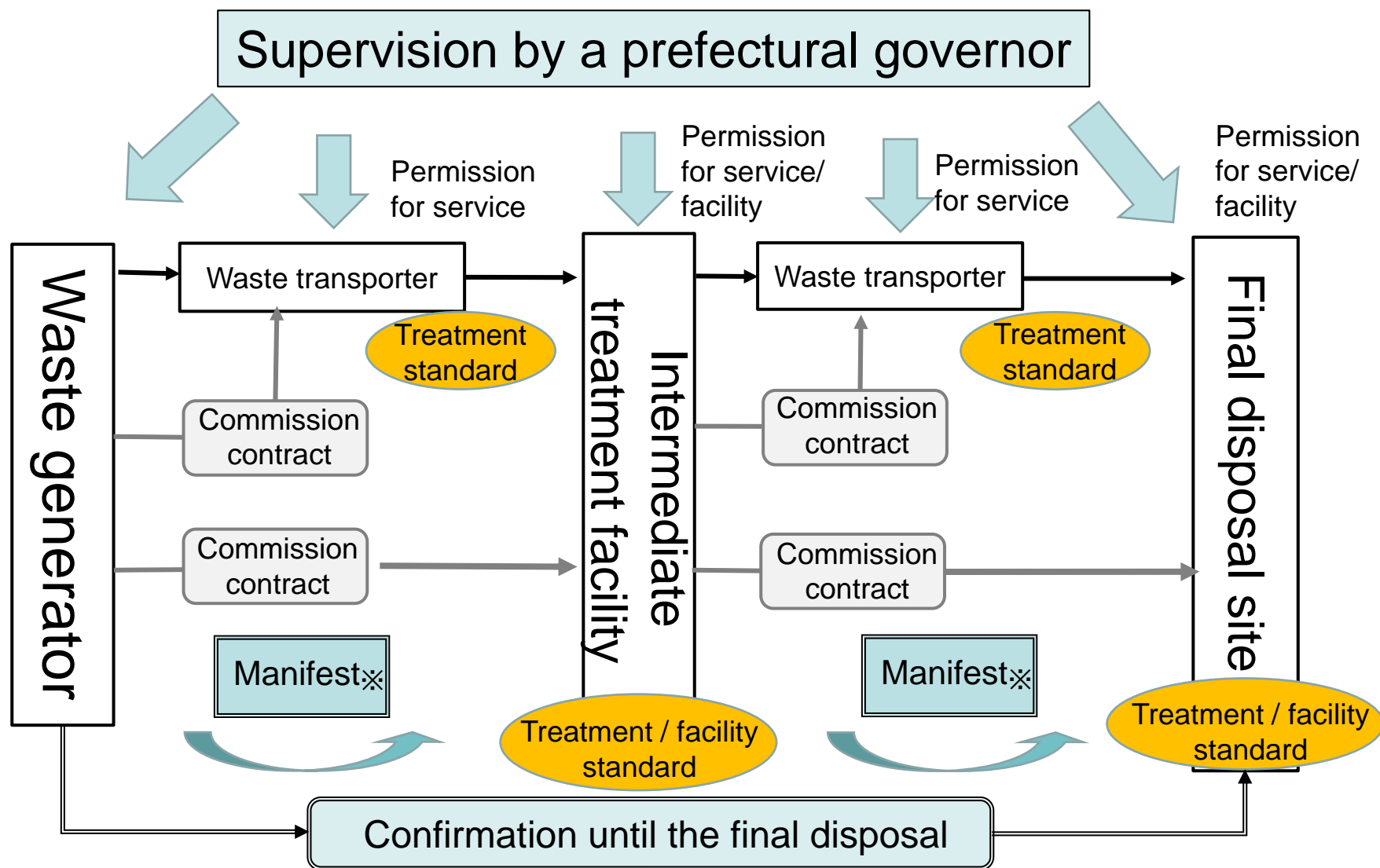


※ The same categories of waste can be classified as either industrial or municipal solid waste depending on the generator and place of waste generation.

Categories of Industrial Wastes (20 types)

- ①Cinders ②Sludge ③Waste oil ④Waste acid ⑤Waste alkali ⑥Waste plastics
- ⑦Waste paper ⑧Waste wood ⑨Waste fibers ⑩Animal and plant residue
- ⑪Solid animal waste ⑫Waste rubber ⑬Waste metal
- ⑭Waste glass, concrete and ceramics ⑮Slag ⑯Construction waste
- ⑰Excrements of animals ⑱Dead animals ⑲Soot and dust
- ⑳Treated material related to the disposal of ①-⑲ that does not fall into these categories.

1-2. Legislative Framework for Management of Industrial Waste



※ Manifest for industrial waste is a set of documents to confirm the implementation of environmentally sound treatment of waste.

1-3. Definition of Infectious Waste

(Background)

“Infectious waste” was included as a category of specially-controlled waste in the revision of the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law in 1991, with criteria established for its treatment.

(Definition of Specially-Controlled Waste)

Waste that are designated by Cabinet Order as having explosive, toxic, infectious or a nature otherwise harmful to human health and the living environment.

(Definition of Infectious Waste)

Waste generated by medical institutions or facilities that contain or may contain infectious pathogens, or to which infectious pathogens are or may be adhered.

Ex: blood, sharps, absorbent cotton, tubes, contaminated bandages and dressings

1-4. Infectious Waste Treatment Manual

The “**Infectious Waste Treatment Manual**” (March 2018, Environmental Regeneration and Material Cycles Bureau, MOEJ) was developed and updated to provide guidance on the sound management of infectious waste.

[Major Criteria]

(Separation)

Infectious waste should be disposed of separately from other waste.

For instance, waste from a hospital is categorized as follows:

- 1) Infectious waste; 2) Non-infectious industrial waste; 3) Other municipal solid waste from business activities (e.g. waste paper)

(Packaging)

Infectious waste should be enclosed in containers that have the following characteristics:

- 1) **Sealable (non-leak);** 2) **Easy to store;** 3) **Damage resistant.**

A container in which infectious waste is stored must be clearly labeled as infectious waste.

(Treatment Standard)

Infectious waste must be transported separately from other waste so as to reduce the risk of infection (e. g. in a closed container) and should be disposed of using the following techniques to eliminate infectivity.

- 1) Incineration; 2) Melting; 3) Sterilization through high pressure steam sterilization (autoclave);
- 4) Sterilization through dry heat sterilization;
- 5) Disinfection (using agents effective against viral hepatitis, or heat processes).

If infectious waste is treated at the medical facility where it is generated to render it non-infectious, it can subsequently be treated as non-infectious waste.

1-5. Determination Standard for Infectious Waste

The Infectious Waste Treatment Manual outlines the criteria for identifying infectious waste by **form**, **place of waste generation** and **type of infectious disease** (provided that the waste is generated by a medical facility).

If a waste falls under one of the following criteria, it is considered as infectious waste.

[Form of Waste]

Waste is classified as infectious waste if it meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) Blood, serum, blood plasma or body fluid (incl. semen);
- 2) Pathological waste (organ, tissue, skin or other);
- 3) Object used for testing, examination or other procedures related to pathogenic microbes;
- 4) Sharp object contaminated with blood, or other body fluids (incl. broken glasses, etc.)

[Place of Waste Generation]

Object used for medical treatment, testing or other procedures and disposed of subsequently from wards for infectious diseases or tuberculosis patients, operation rooms, intensive care units or examination rooms.

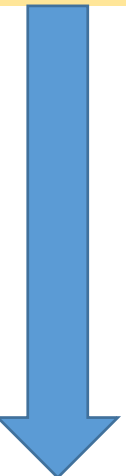
[Type of Infectious Waste]

- 1) Object used and disposed of in relation to medical treatment, testing and other procedures for Class I, II and III infectious diseases, new influenza and other diseases, designated infections or new infectious diseases;
- 2) Medical tool used and disposed of in relation to medical treatment and testing and other procedures for Class IV and V infectious diseases (includes diapers for patients with specific infectious diseases).

2-1. Application of “Guidelines for Measures against New Influenza in Waste Treatment”

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on New Influenza and Avian Influenza was established.

- Action plan on measures against new influenza (established in Nov. 2005, amended in Feb.2009)

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- It is necessary to continue the operation of waste management as an essential service to maintain the minimum living standards of the nation.
 - A consideration was made in 2008 on the environmentally sound management of waste in a safe and consistent manner in the event of a new influenza epidemic.
 - Summary of knowledge on new influenza, measures to be taken by parties concerned, including municipalities and waste treatment enterprises, and other relevant information.

**Development of “Guidelines on Measures for New Strains of Influenza in Waste Management”
(Mar. 2009)**

As an infection route of COVID-19 is similar to that of new strains of influenza, the measures required for preventing the spread of infection and treating waste are likewise the same.

Hence, as an initial response, it was announced that the measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis would be in line with the existing “Guidelines on Measures for New Strains of Influenza in Waste Management” (Mar. 2009).

2-2. Backdrop to COVID-19 Crisis in Japan

Jan. 15	The first patient in Japan was identified.
Jan. 30	WHO declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).
Mar. 2	Emergency national closure of elementary and middle schools.
Apr. 7	The government declared a state of emergency . “Basic Policies for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control” were amended. <u>Waste treatment enterprises were listed as a business required to continue operations under the state of emergency to maintain the minimum living standards of the nation.</u>
May 25	Lifting of the state of emergency

2-3. Outcome of Waste Management Measures in Response to the Spread of COVID-19

～ Initial actions ～

- Since the number of infections was relatively low during the initial phase of the spread in Japan, response measures tended to be targeted at specific site, such as the cruise ship with cluster or returnees from Wuhan.
- Municipalities and relevant parties were instructed to take measures complying with the existing Infectious Waste Treatment Manual and the Guidelines on Measures for New Strains of Influenza in Waste Management.

～ Actions during the spread of infection ～

- Creation of leaflets for medical facilities, households, temporary lodging facilities (for recuperation) and waste transporters, respectively.
- Development of Q&As regarding measures against COVID-19 in waste management.
- Enactment of legislative amendments to deal with potential shortfalls in regular normal waste treatment capacity or issues concerning compliance with performance obligations.
- Bridging PPE (personal protective equipment) providers and waste treatment operators of municipalities and enterprises who had the difficulties with procurement.
- Lastly, the “**Guidelines on Measures for COVID-19 in Waste Management**” were developed as a compilation of the relevant actions and outcomes.

2-4. Sample Leaflet Content (for Medical Facilities)

Precautions regarding waste contaminated with COVID-19 from medical institutions etc.

- Infectious waste contaminated with COVID-19 can be disposed of in the same manner as other infectious waste. It should be treated in compliance with the Infectious Waste Treatment Manual.

- Objects that can be reused after sterilization (e.g. linen) should not be disposed of unwittingly.

- Infectious waste should be packaged in appropriate containers according to the type or characteristics. The container should be sealable, easy to store, and damage-resistant.

For Medical Institutes and Staff Handling Medical Waste Novel Coronavirus-Related Waste

Infectious waste related to the novel coronavirus can be handled in the same manner as other infectious waste. (Please follow "Infectious Waste Treatment Manual under the Waste Management and Public Cleaning Act")

In order to reduce amount of waste, do NOT waste items (such as linens) which can be disinfected for reuse.

Linens and towels used by those who are infected or suspected of infection with the novel coronavirus may be handled in the same way as handling items contaminated with other infectious diseases. Therefore, please do not unwittingly dispose of them, but follow the same method and process applied to existing infection controls. Cautions must be taken to avoid direct contact by wearing gloves and a facemask; then implement the normal process including hot water laundry and disinfection with hypochlorous acid or alcohol.

Infectious waste should be contained or sealed appropriately depending on types and characteristics of the waste.

Please choose appropriate containers along with kinds and characteristics of the infectious waste, which is able to be sealed, easy to be stored, not easy to be damaged.

① Sharps like injection needles and scalpels

② Bloodlike liquid or muddy material

③ Non-reusable items like gauze contaminated with blood

Sturdy containers with certain penetration resistance

Leakage preventive sealing containers

Double bagged sturdy plastic bag and/or sturdy container



Ex.) Plastic container box



Ex.) Plastic bag (double bagged) and Cardboard container (sealed bag contained inside)

※Please follow rules of respective local municipalities.

2-5 Sample Questions in FAQs

Q1-7 Is spraying disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite, onto waste or garbage bags an effective infection prevention measures for operators involved with handling or transporting waste from households or temporary lodging facilities (for recuperation)?

A1-7 Disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite or alcohol, are considered effective for COVID-19 sterilization purposes. However, sterilization in this manner may not be fully effective since the action of just spraying disinfectant may not cover the entire surface of the materials concerned, and may be harmful since it may cause health damage of operator from inhaling of disinfectant. Therefore, it is also necessary to use a towel or a cloth soaked in disinfectant solution and to wipe all surfaces carefully.

Note that double-bagging (putting one bag into another) is equally effective as wiping with a disinfectant. Most importantly, to prevent the risk of infection, operators should wear appropriate PPE, including gloves, and take other precautions such as regularly using hand sanitizer and thoroughly washing their hands.

2-6. Amendment of Regulations of Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law

[May 1, 2020 Published and enforced]

Legislative measures were put in place to ensure operational continuity in the event of disruption to activity due to outbreaks of infection at waste management facilities.

[Amended items]

- (1) **Exemption in special cases for designated business operators by the central government, prefecture or municipality to conduct waste management operations on an emergency basis without a Permission.**
- (2) **Exemption in special cases for relaxation on the legal limit of waste storage capacity for some operators.**
- (3) Other exemptions required in accordance with (1) and (2) above.

[May 15, 2020 Published and enforced]

Legislative measures put in place to provide for situations where operators may struggle to fulfill certain obligations by deadlines fixed under the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law.

[Amended items]

- (1) **Extension of deadlines for annual reports and other documents.**
- (2) **Exemption for notification of changes to Permissions for waste management operations.**
- (3) **Exemption for period of regular inspections of waste management facilities.**
- (4) **Exemption concerning entries in waste management manifests.**
- (5) **Exemption for notifications on the storage of industrial waste.**
- (6) **Other amendments** required in accordance with (1)-(5) above.

(Ref.) Overview of “Guidelines for Measures against COVID-19 in Waste Treatment”

Introduction	Basic Information on COVID-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The incubation period of COVID-19 is considered to be 1–14 days (generally 5–6 days). The main transmission routes are droplets, physical contact and infection via microdroplets. Avoidance of the “three Cs” (closed spaces, crowded spaces, close contact settings) is considered effective as a preventive measure.- After the lifting of the state of emergency, establishment of a “New Lifestyle” is required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.- Waste management is listed as an essential operation for maintaining socio-economic activities at a national level under the basic response measure.	

Chapter Types, Characteristics, and precautions of waste contaminated with COVID-19

Disposal point	Major characteristics [Waste category]	Precautions when disposing of waste
① Households, and offices (excl., ② and ③)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Households and offices do not fall under the category of facilities where infectious waste is discharged</u> under the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law. 【municipal solid waste/ Industrial waste】	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Avoid direct contact with the waste. Tie and close garbage bags tightly</u> before they are completely full. <u>Wash hands thoroughly using soap</u> or similar substances after disposal.• <u>“Double bagging” (putting one bag inside the other)</u> is effective if circumstances require.
② Medical institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The risk of infection from waste should be assessed in accordance with the criteria outlined in the “Infectious Waste Treatment Manual”. 【municipal solid waste / Industrial waste / Infectious municipal solid waste / Infectious industrial waste】	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care should be taken to <u>avoid mixing infectious waste with other waste</u>.• Infectious waste should be clearly labeled as such. It should be put in an appropriate container according to the form and type of waste. <u>Containers with infectious waste should be sealed</u>.• Putrescible waste should be stored in a manner so as to <u>avoid putrefaction, such as refrigeration or freezing</u>.• Unless there is a particular reason for doing so, waste contaminated with COVID-19 does not need to be separated from other infectious waste materials at disposal.
③ Temporary lodging facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As the facility is not where doctors and other relevant personnel conduct medical practice, <u>it does not fall under the category of facilities where infectious waste is generated</u> under the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law. 【municipal solid waste / Industrial waste】	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Avoid direct contact with the waste. Tie and close garbage bags tightly</u> before they are completely full. <u>Wash hands thoroughly using soap</u> or similar substances after disposal.• <u>“Double bagging” (putting one bag inside the other)</u> is effective if circumstances require.• Avoid disposing unwittingly of linen materials that have been used by COVID-19 infected patients, since these can be sterilized and reused.

(Ref.) Overview of “Guidelines for Measures against COVID-19 in Waste Treatment”

Chapter Points to Consider concerning Waste Management

	Infection prevention measures (examples)
① Common to treatment operations and office work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Practice the “<u>New Life Style</u>”, including three basic initiatives for preventing the spread of infection (maintain social distance (2 meters as much as possible), wear a face mask and regularly wash hands).<u>Try to stay in good physical condition</u>, for example by taking enough rest, establishing a routine, and checking your temperature regularly.<u>Any employee considered as a high-risk contact</u> (e.g. who has a COVID-positive patient in their family) <u>should stay at home</u>.
② Treatment operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When dealing with waste, <u>operators must wear gloves, a face mask and work clothes with minimal exposed skin, along with other PPE as necessary</u>.After their work, <u>operators must wash and disinfect their hands thoroughly</u>.<u>Any surfaces</u> in a transportation vehicle or facility which <u>may have come into contact with operators’ hands, gloves and other PPE must be cleaned and sterilized</u>.During work breaks, when changing clothes, riding in a transportation vehicle and other occasions as required, <u>avoid the “three Cs”</u> and maintain social distance when speaking to others.
③ Office work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>Employees should work from home</u> as much as possible. <u>Office areas should be cleaned and sterilized regularly</u>.<u>Restrict the number of visitors to the office. Keep a record of all visitors’ names</u> and contact details in case these are required later on.If a business trip is necessary, <u>keep a record of the people met, the itinerary of the trip and any other relevant information</u>.

Chapter Risks associated with COVID-19 and Measures the Patient concerned Should take

- If infection is spreading, the following risks relating to the sound management of waste should be taken into consideration.
- Waste collection, transportation, and treatment capacity may be constrained due to increased volumes of infectious waste and household waste.
 - Waste management activities may be delayed or capacity constrained depending on supply shortages of PPE, outbreak of infection among operator’s staff or operational difficulties for the business concerned.
 - Contact awards and the issue of Permissions may be subject to delay, depending on infection levels among staff at prefectural or municipal offices.

Examples of measures to be taken by relevant parties

Waste generator	Waste management operator	Municipality	Prefecture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">For household waste, avoid direct contact with waste. Tie garbage bags tightly, after thoroughly expelling excess air from the bag.For infectious waste from medical institutions, follow the standards set out in the Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A business continuity plan should be established.In the event of the spread of infection, implement measures as appropriate in line with the plan.Regularly review and update the plan as required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disseminate information concerning government notifications, guidelines and manuals, FAQs, leaflets, and other information as appropriate.Comply fully with all obligations concerning the treatment and disposal of non-industrial waste.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Disseminate information concerning government notifications, guidelines and manuals, FAQs, leaflets, and other information as appropriate to municipalities, waste management operators and waste generators.Ensure that all waste management activity is carried out in an environmentally sound manner.