

In Japan, ambulance service was originated by the Osaka Branch Office of the Japan Red Cross in 1931. In 1933 the fire department organ of Yokohama started ambulance service. It was, however, without any legal requirements. Since the early 1960s, Japan has experienced a rapid development of industry and economy, so that traffic accidents have increased, necessitating a nationwide ambulance service system. In October 1961 the Director-General of the Fire Defense Agency organized the Fire Defense Council to study the problem of ambulance service. In response, the Fire Defense Act was amended in 1963, assigning ambulance service responsibilities to Fire Defense organs. During 1982 total ambulance runs numbered 2,125,447, and the total number of transported persons was 2,049,487. Response time is excellent in Japan. More than 50% of persons who called an ambulance could get help within five minutes. First-aid management was given to 56% of total transported persons. Of these, temperature regulation was most often administered, followed by oxygen inhalation, dressing, and hemostasis. Currently, 2,965 (91.1%) municipalities provide ambulance services to 98.3% of the population. The Japanese emergency medical system has serious problems, however, such as an inadequate number of general hospitals and a flood of nonemergent patients. To alleviate such problems, the Ministry of Health and Welfare developed the critical emergency transfer system in 1977.