

A Message for Families Returning to Misawa

By Col. Michael Rothstein, Misawa Air Base Installation Commander

Many of you may have heard that both the State Department and the Department of Defense have lifted the voluntary departure order, allowing those who left Misawa following the earthquakes to return. From the moment we received the news Friday, the wing has been working diligently to reunite you with your loved ones here in Japan.

You may have also seen news reports about the nuclear situation in areas south of Misawa. Knowing that your decision to return to Misawa is based partly on how safe the base is, I want to reiterate the message I've shared previously: The current nuclear situation does not pose appreciable risk to Misawa Air Base at this time. While it's true that the International Atomic Energy Agency has upgraded the classification of the nuclear situation, this classification is NOT an indicator of a decrease in safety at Misawa. I'm not understating the seriousness of the situation there; we are monitoring it very closely. But the Department of Defense would not have terminated the departure order if the situation were not safe for our military families.

We are 232 miles north of the area in question, and have not experienced any issues that make it unsafe for you or your families to return. In fact, aside from the occasional aftershock, life has returned back to normal for most of the installation.

Class is in session at Cummings, Sollars and Edgren. Children are enjoying the warmer weather.

Our active duty members and civilians are hard at work, whether accomplishing their day-to-day mission or volunteering with Misawa Helps to clean-up the local community.

Golfers are hitting the greens, and our recreational facilities have been open for business for several weeks now. Aside from our work helping the people of Japan, there's a lot going on at Misawa. (Misawa IDOL is LIVE at the club tonight!)

The decision to return rests with you and your family. It's not my intent to influence that decision, and as I said before, I am not emotionally attached to what families chose. But, if thinking about safety is one of your criteria, know that things are going fairly well at Misawa.

For those of you who want to return, please stay in touch with your sponsor and his/her unit. Follow the travel instructions being provided, and exercise patience as we work to bring you home. Guidance will become more clear shortly, so flexibility will be key.

Thanks for your service to our Misawa family.

Col Michael Rothstein

35 Fighter Wing Commander