

A simulation model development of firefighting activity by community residents against coseismic fire spread using multi-agent system

As a support tool for community-based disaster prevention planning

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Abstract: This paper attempted to develop a simulation model of residents' firefighting activity against coseismic fire spread using multi-agent system. The developed model was applied to a case study area. In the application, the simulations were carried out to the existing area and eleven cases of the assumption (virtual conditions) of the area where are implemented various non-physical and physical measures. As a result, the measures with only physical and haphazard multitude of measures did not show a remarked effect of disaster prevention performance. And, it is confirmed that the model can visually, dynamically and quantitatively output results. From these outputs, the possibility of contribution for enhancing residents' awareness and drafting a plan of disaster prevention was confirmed. However, there are still some problems to be solved for the practical use of the model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Japan has suffered various damages by many great earthquakes. In particular, densely built-up area with decrepit wooden buildings and many narrow roads has sustained enormous damage by building collapse, fire

spread and others each time. The high risk area still exists in substantial amounts nevertheless, where have a lot of serious problems such as uncertainty of safe evacuation, firefighting, rescue and threat of fire spread. For the solution to these problems and reduce the risk level in Japan, there is need for promotion of efforts to improve the local environment through cooperative consensus building between the residents and the administration of the areas.

To promote the efforts, enhancing residents' awareness and drafting a plan of disaster prevention are necessary. But, there is limit to change the residents' mind by the traditional method such as briefing and public information (newsletter, bulletin, etc.). Moreover, it is difficult for residents who do not have expertise to make concrete a plan. From these situations, the support technology development of community-based planning for disaster prevention has societal demand in Japan.

For the enhancing awareness and the drafting a plan, they have to deal various major difficulties from the point of view of disaster prevention. Especially in the densely built-up area, measures of fire spread prevention are generally addressed as a main theme because most of the area is structured by highly combustible building. Additionally the local administrative fire department cannot response to all the fires in case of multiple fires by massive earthquake. Therefore, firefighting activity of community residents is extremely important for minimizing damage of the area. Against such a background, if there were a tool that could provide the residents information on simulation results of fire spread and residents' firefighting activity in case of an existing circumstance and an improved circumstance, the tool would be useful for the enhancing awareness and the planning. For more effective providing information, a simulation model development which can accurately, visually and dynamically reproduce an actual phenomenon is required. As a one method for the model development, Multi-Agent System (MAS) which has potential for analysis and understanding of societal phenomena is brought to international attention in fields such as social science, economics and urban planning.

Based on the above, this paper attempted to develop a simulation model of firefighting activity by community residents against coseismic fire spread using multi-agent system as a support tool for community-based disaster prevention planning.

This study's approach is outlined as follows. Firstly, we tried to develop the model by reference to previous researches. Secondly, the developed model was applied to an existing case study area and the virtually-improved area. And, the effect of improvement were analysed and discussed using the simulation results. Finally, the usefulness and problems of the proposed model were discussed from outcome of this process.

2. FIREFIGHTING ACTIVITY BY RESIDENTS AND MULTI-AGENT SYSTEM

Multi-Agent System (MAS) is composed by multiple interacting intelligent agents and environments that are independent subjects. They have several characteristics such as attribute, algorithms and at al. They are additionally interdependent and influence each other (Ohuchi, Yamamoto and et al., 2007). MAS is not a monolithic system, it is intended to reproduce the actual situations as realistic as possible by modelling of unpredictable phenomena , for example natural phenomena, human society which contain wide variety of character, uncertainties, various factors and at al (Yamakage, 2007).

Previous research using this technology has been advancing in various fields including economics, social science, and engineering. In the field of urban planning, MAS is used to understand dynamic and complicated urban phenomena and to predict land use changes, pedestrian behavior and optimization of facility placement. The firefighting activity by residents against fire spread is a phenomenon, in which various factors related to the circumstances of built-up area, residents' attribute and ability are intricately related. From results of previous research, this phenomenon must be reproduced by constructing appropriate model using MAS.

For enhancing residents' awareness and planning to promote community-based disaster prevention activities, easy-to-understand and effective simulation outputs are required. Using MAS, it is possible to visually, quantitatively and dynamically provide information about the simulation results.

In the present study, using the results of previous research and the characteristics of MAS, we have developed model of a residents' firefighting activity against fire spread.

3. BASIC CONCEPT FOR MODEL DEVELOPMENT

In this paper, the overview flow of whole firefighting activity was set as shown in *Figure 1* based on previous research. The firefighting can be treated separately divided into "firefighting in an early stage" and "Fire spread prevention activity". The former is intended to extinguish origin of fire, and the latter's objective is block of fire spread to neighboring buildings for prevention the damage from spreading as a district. In case of the former, it is generally considered in Japanese firefighting circles that if residents can

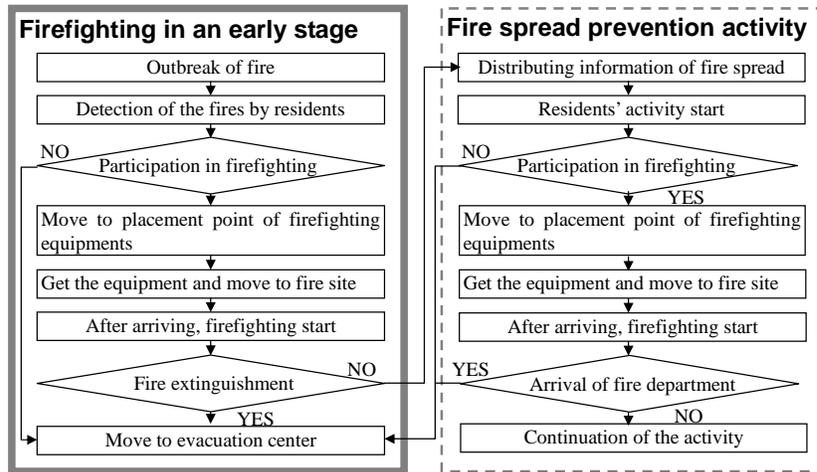


Figure 1. Overview flow of whole the firefighting activity

reach the fire site within ten minutes, there is a possibility of control a fire by firefighting using extinguishers (Kanai and Kaji, 2002). And, it is important to extinguish in an early stage for minimizing the damage, because of the stage is less ability to cause the fire spread and burning area is small.

From the above, this paper attempts to construct a model of the part of heavy gray line in *Figure 1* that is especially important in the firefighting.

4. MODEL DEVELOPMENT

For the development, agents and elements of environment were set as shown in *Table 1*. As mentioned above, this model development aims to output simulation results with realistic, and the model deals with early stage's firefighting that is a very short period of time. Therefore, the unit of the time is one second, and the space of the model was composed a lattice array of one by one meter cells. The model consists fire spread model and residents' firefighting model. These models are described below.

4.1 Fire Spread Model

Fire spread model of this paper use the achievements of the previous research (Ohgai, Gohnai and Watanabe, 2007). The outline of the model is described below. As for details, please refer to the paper.

Transitions in the cell state and types of neighborhoods used in the model are set as shown in *Table 2* and *Figure 2*.

Table 1. Agents and environment in the developed model

Category	Element	Content
Agent	a) Residents	It has parameters of movement speed and start position as exogenous attributes, and keeping state of firefighting equipments and participation or nonparticipation in firefighting as endogenously attributes. Residents basically move on roads and open spaces, but they can enter only burning buildings for firefighting.
	b) Fire (Fire spread)	It has state of catching fire, burning, naturally extinguished, and extinguished by firefighting as attribute.
Environment (Built-up area)	c) Building	It has parameters of structure (wooden, fire-prevention wooden and fireproof) and the ratio of the area occupied by wooden or fire-prevention wooden buildings in cell as exogenous attributes. And, it has parameters of state (catching fire, burning, naturally extinguished, and extinguished by firefighting) and the ability of fire spread.
	d) Road	Public and private roads. It has two situation of normal and blockage by building collapse.
	e) Open space	Open-air car parks, farmlands, unused land and etc.
	f) Extinguisher	Fire extinguisher of general type that is placed in built-up area of Japan.
	g) Storage of supplies and equipments for disasters	It is small building to storage various supplies for disasters. In this paper, it was assumed that portable fire pump is stored in the storage.
	h) Water tank for firefighting	It was assumed that the capacity of the tank is about forty cubic meters (it is in widespread use all of Japan)
	i) Evacuation Center	The assigned evacuation sites such as elementary schools, junior high schools, community centers and etc. by the municipality.

Table 2. State of a cell

Expression	Explanation
[0]	$n_{mn} = 0$: Unburnable; Having nothing burning.
[1]	$n_{mn} = 1$: Not burning yet; Having the possibility of burning.
[2]	$n_{mn} = 2$: Catching fire; Just catching fire, but having no ability to cause the spread of fire.
[3]	$n_{mn} = 3$: Burning; Having the ability to cause the spread of fire.
[4]	$n_{mn} = 4$: Extinguished (subsidence of fire); Not having the ability to cause the spread of fire.
[5]	$n_{mn} = 5$: Extinguished by firefighting; Not having the ability to cause the spread of fire.

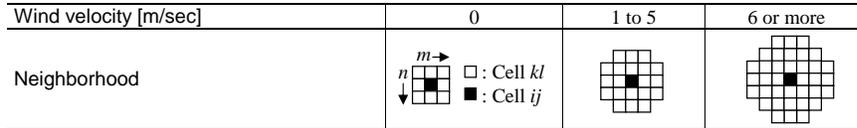


Figure 2. Neighborhoods used in the model

The fire spreading judgment, that is, whether or not cell ij changes from state [1] to state [2], is performed using the fire spreading probability of cell ij . The probability is given by the fire spreading judgment index F_{ij} . This is calculated for all ij cells within the neighborhood of cell kl and defined by equation (1).

$$F_{ij} = S_{ij} \cdot P_{ij} \cdot W_{ij} \cdot p(t_{ckl}) \quad (1)$$

where S_{ij} is a building structure parameter, P_{ij} is the ratio of the area occupied by wooden or fire-prevention wooden buildings in cell ij , W_{ij} is a parameter determined by the wind velocity and direction, and $p(t_{ckl})$ is the ability of cell kl to cause the spread of fire. These values range from 0 to 1.

Figure 3 shows the flow of the fire spread model in addition to a residents' firefighting model described later.

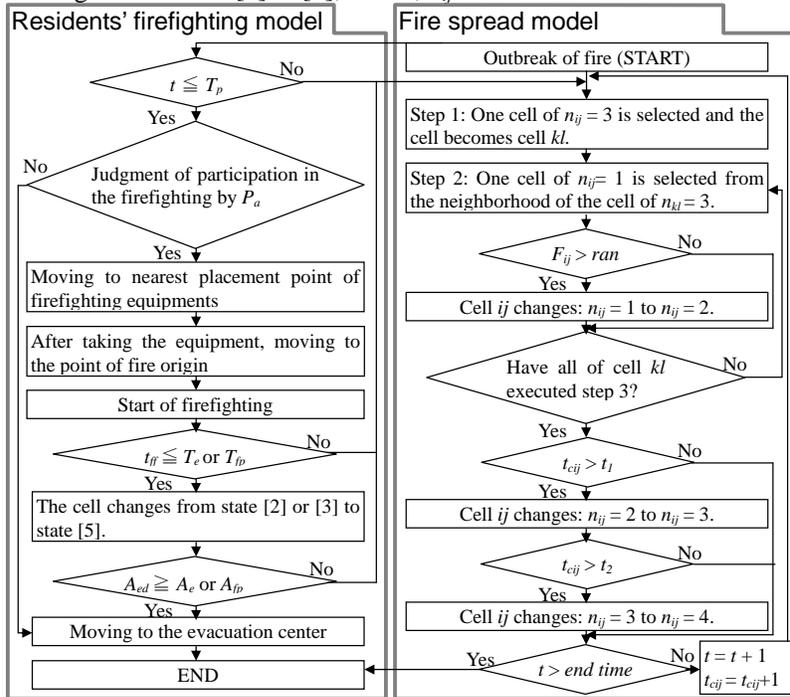
- Step 1: First, one cell kl of $n_{kl} = 3$ is selected.
- Step 2: One cell ij of $n_{ij} = 1$ is selected at random from the neighborhood defined by the wind direction and wind velocity externally given when starting the simulation.
- Step 3: The fire spreading judgment index F_{ij} of the selected cell ij is calculated. If F_{ij} satisfies the following requirements, the state of cell ij becomes $n_{ij} = 2$ (catching fire):

$$\text{If } n_{ij}(t) = 1 \text{ and } F_{ij} > \text{ran} \text{ then } n_{ij}(t+1) = 2 \quad (2)$$

where $n_{ij}(t)$ is the state of cell ij at simulation time t and ran is a random number from 0 to 1.

Note that t_{cij} is the elapsed time after the outbreak of fire in cell ij . The time count of t_{cij} starts when the state of cell ij changes from state [1] to [2]; that is, when equation (2) is satisfied. Steps 2 and 3 are iterated for all cells ij within the neighborhood of cell kl . Further, the process regarding cell kl is executed for all cells in state [3].

- Step 4: The state of cell ij after catching fire changes according to the elapsed time after the outbreak of fire t_{cij} . In other words, if the value of t_{cij} is more than $t_1 = 2$ [min], cell ij changes from state [2] to [3]; that is, $n_{ij} = 3$.
- Step 5: Moreover, if the value of t_{cij} is more than $t_2 = 10$ [min], cell ij changes from state [3] to [4]; that is, $n_{ij} = 4$.



t : simulation time [sec], T_p : detection time of fire outbreak, P_a : percentage of firefighting participants[%], T_e : The time for control a fire by extinguisher [sec], T_{fp} : the time for control a fire by portable fire pump [sec], A_e : the number of extinguishable cell by an extinguisher[cell], A_{fp} : the number of extinguishable cell by portable fire pump[cell], t_{cij} : elapsed time after outbreak of fire [sec], t_1 : The time until cell kl becomes able to cause the spread of fire after catching fire [sec], t_2 : The time until cell kl burns out after catching fire [sec], $end\ time$: end time of simulation [sec], F_{ij} : fire spreading judgment index of cell ij , ran : random number given within the range from the maximum to the minimum value of F_{ij} , t_{ff} : The elapsed time from the start of firefighting in each cell [sec], A_{ed} : Number of the cell extinguished by firefighting [cell]

Figure 3. Flow of the model

- Step 6: The simulation ends when the time t [min] becomes the end time externally given in the model. The time t is counted from the start of the simulation to the end. When the time t does not reach the end time, 1 is added to t_{cij} of cell state [2] and t , and the process then returns to step 1.

4.2 Residents' Firefighting Model

The following firefighting process was modeled as bellow in this study.

After a lapse of detection time of fire outbreak T_p [sec], residents participate in the firefighting or move to the evacuation center. Whether or not residents participate the firefighting are set by percentage of firefighting participants P_a [%] that is randomly and endogenously given residents the rate at the start of simulation. Residents of participation in firefighting move to nearest placement point of extinguisher or portable fire pump according to the attribute of the usable equipments. After taking the equipment, they move to the point of fire origin at the movement speed S_r [m/sec] according to the situation of agents' keeping equipments and road blockage by building collapse. Resident keeping extinguisher or portable fire pump can change cells of state [2] and [3] (catching fire and burning) to state [5] (extinguished by firefighting) according to these equipments' performance. When resident used up the equipment, they move to the evacuation center.

The model flow of the residents' firefighting and fire spread are shown in *Figure 3*. Additionally, the detailed information about parameters and setting values of the resident's firefighting model are shown in *Table 3*.

The parameter values were set based on previous researches, but, for consideration of the subject area's condition, the developed model was incorporated control modules that can easily adjust the value.

5. APPLICATION OF THE DEVELOPED MODEL

As a case study, the developed method is applied to Akumi district, Japan (*Figure 4*). The district is located in the Japanese local cities of Toyohashi and is considered as having disaster prevention issues due to existence of many narrow roads and densely built-up area with old wooden structures (*Figure 5*). Furthermore, occurrences of big earthquakes are feared in the municipality. The Japanese government designated the municipality as focus area for earthquake disaster prevention measures in 2002. Therefore, the municipality in the case study district is seriously working on improvement projects for disaster prevention.

number of households and stay-at-home percentage referenced by census data (Toyohashi city, 2007).

5.2 Setting of Simulation Cases

The simulations of the following four categories (eleven cases) were carried out to confirm simulation results on the existing circumstances and the improvement effect by assumption (virtual conditions) of physical and non-physical measures. *Table 4* shows the detailed setting of simulation cases.

The non-physical measures are assumed improvement of human and community capabilities of disaster prevention by awareness enhancement, disaster drills and et al. And, the assumptions of physical measures are increasing in disaster prevention performance by improvement of the local environment such as antiseismic reinforcement of buildings, addition of firefighting equipments and et al. In the combinations of non-physical and physical measures, the following two cases were set; 1) the all measures of non-physical and physical (six measures), 2) the most effective one non-physical and one physical measures.

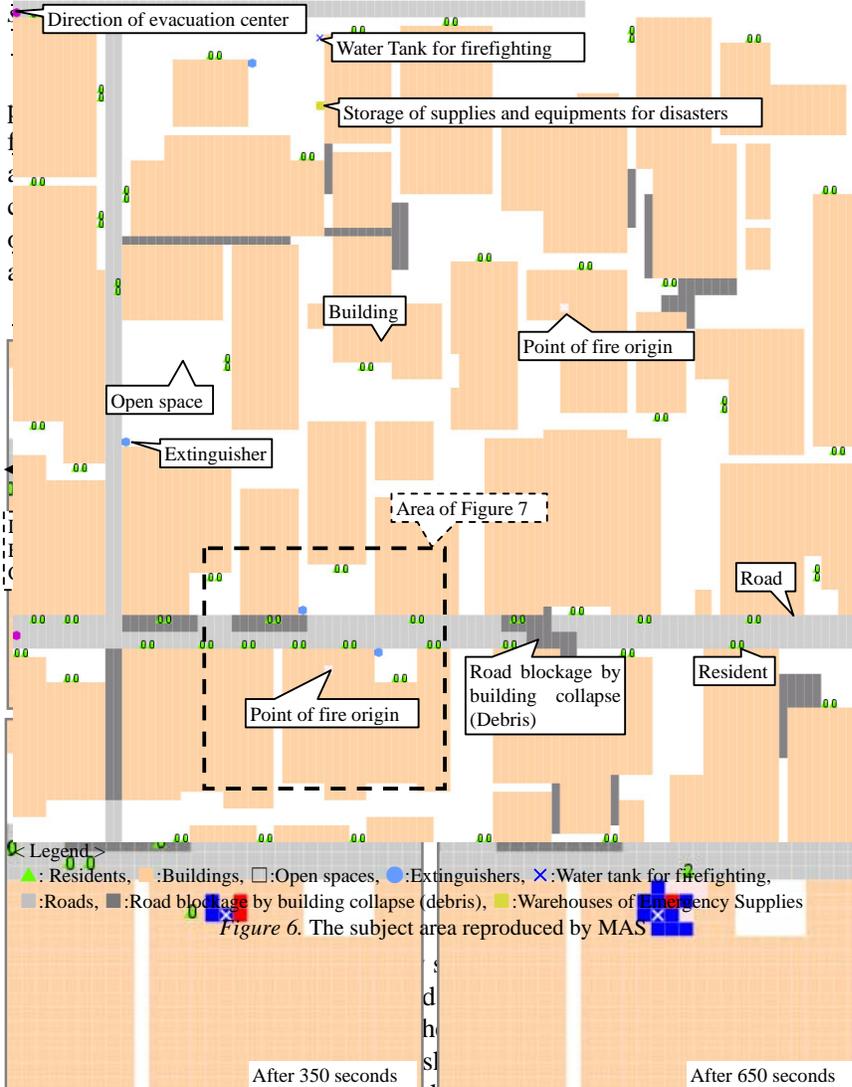


Figure 6. The subject area reproduced by MAS

After 300 seconds of outbreak of the fire, the condition of resident's firefighting using portable fire pump at the elapsed time 650 seconds can also be seen in the figure. And Figure 8 quantitatively shows an example of simulation result by graph representation in real time. From this figure, it is possible to confirm the cell number of burning, extinguished cell by firefighting and naturally extinguished cell.

Figure 7. An example of simulation result by map representation

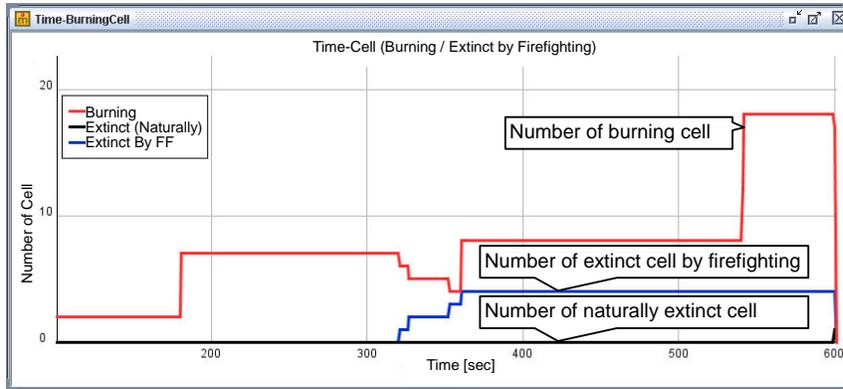


Figure 8. An example of simulation result by graph representation

It is considered that the above simulation results may help residents in consensus building, enhancing awareness of the need for improvement of the local environment and decision making when planning for disaster prevention.

However, the actual time required for simulation calculation of the one case was about an hour using a personal computer with an Intel Core 2 Duo 1.6 GHz CPU and 1 GB memory (depending on the simulation conditions of each case).

5.3 Analysis and Discussion of Simulation Results

The simulation results of firefighting in an early stage that is ten minutes after fire breakout are analyzed and discussed the improvement effect of disaster prevention performance in the subject area using three indexes shown in Table 5. Figure 9 shows simulation results of all cases by the index.

C-2 that is implemented two measures (one non-physical and one physical) has a high probability of extinguishment by residents' firefighting more than P-4 implemented three physical measures. From this fact, it is surmised that the only physical measures have only a limited effect. When compared to C-2 and C-1 that is implemented many different varieties of measures (six measures), C-1 is about twenty percent higher than C-2 in the probability of extinguishment by residents' firefighting more than C-2, however the number of burned cells is almost the same. From these results, it is conceivable that a haphazard implementation of many different varieties of measures can not achieve a significant effect of the improvement.

It is considered that the above results mean not merely need for multitude measures but the importance of measures by adequate investigation of the contents or balance between physical and non-physical measures.

Table 5. Use data for analysis and discussion of simulation results

Index name	Explanation
The number of burned cells	The sum of cell number of state [2], [3] and [4] (catching fire, burning and extinguished by naturally)
The number of extinguished cells by residents' firefighting	The cell number of state [5] (extinguished by residents' firefighting)
The probability of extinguishment by residents' firefighting	If there is not cell of state [2] or [3] (catching fire or burning) in the subject area at ten minutes after fire breakout, the samples are treated as the completely extinguishment samples. And, "The probability of extinguishment by residents' firefighting" is percentage of the completely extinguishment samples in the all samples (fifty simulation results)

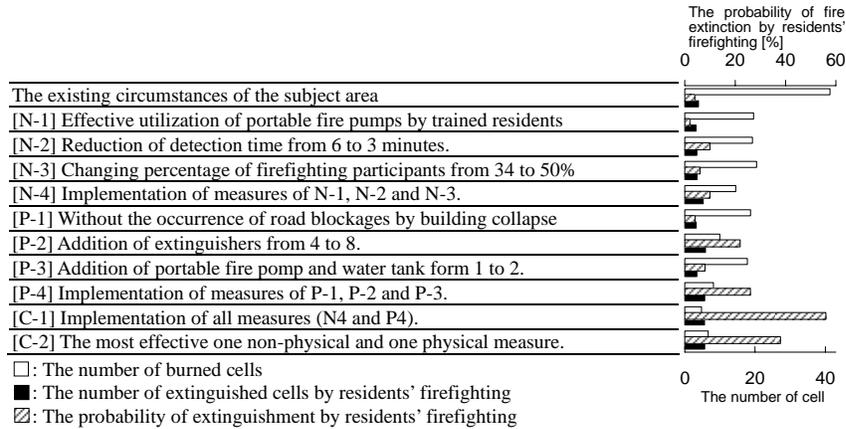


Figure 9. Comparison of simulation results of all cases

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have attempted to develop a simulation model of firefighting activity by community residents against coseismic fire spread using multi-agent system in order to provide useful information to residents in community-based planning for disaster prevention.

The developed model was applied to a case study area having disaster prevention issues in Japanese local city. In the application, the simulations were carried out to the existing area and eleven cases of the virtually-improved area where are implemented various non-physical and physical measures.

The simulation results of the all cases were analyzed and discussed the improvement effect of disaster prevention performance in the subject area using three indexes. As a result, the improvement of only physical measures combination and multitude measures did not show a remarked effect of

disaster prevention performance. This finding suggests that the quality of measure is more important than the quantity.

In addition, it is confirmed that the developed model are able to output real-time animation on a digital map with behavior of fire spread and residents' firefighting activity, and graph of cell number (burned cells and extinguished cells by residents' firefighting). From these visual, dynamic and quantitative outputs, the possibility of contribution for enhancing residents' awareness and drafting a plan of disaster prevention is confirmed.

However, the proposed model is no more than an experimental development, the remaining problems for the practical use of the model are as follows; 1) shortening the calculation time, 2) incorporation of various factors related firefighting activity into the developed model for more realistic reproduction, 3) investigation of setting values of the parameters, 4) characteristics analysis of the developed model, 5) upgrading the expression of the simulation result more real and easily understood (ex; cooperation with WebGIS)

Moreover, in our future work we intend to address the above problems through experimentation in actual community participatory activities for disaster prevention.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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