


# Managers of historic sites across Japan on alert following devastating fire at Okinawa's Shuri Castle

 [japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/01/national/japan-sites-on-alert-after-okinawa-fire](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/01/national/japan-sites-on-alert-after-okinawa-fire)

Thursday's fire that devastated Shuri Castle, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site in Okinawa Prefecture, triggered a sense of alarm among people and organizations managing historic sites in the country.

At an emergency meeting held at Nijo Castle in the city of Kyoto, participants, including representatives of local shrines and temples, exchanged views on the latest fire, which sent shock waves throughout the country, and measures to protect their facilities.

An official from Kyoto's Toji temple said that "how to operate fire protection equipment at night is an important issue." An official from Kamigamo Shrine, also in Kyoto, said people living around the sites, and also those visiting them, should cooperate and check to see that everything is normal.

A local fire department official noted that fires often happen at buildings that are under construction and said, "In the first place, it is important to try to prevent fires from starting." The official said that fire authorities are preparing to conduct emergency checks of fire protection equipment at temples and shrines and provide advice on any measures that might be necessary.

The *tenshukaku* (castle keep) and the Honmaru Goten palace at Nijo Castle, which is managed by the Kyoto Municipal Government, burned down in a fire in the 18th century. "We need to be careful because electricity and fire are used in various events at the castle," Nobuyuki Kitamura, said an official in charge of the management of the castle, which is part of a World Heritage site in the city and surrounding areas.

An official at the education board of Iwate Prefecture said they "should redouble efforts" to prevent a fire from occurring at Chusonji temple, a structure at a World Heritage site in the town of Hiraizumi.

An inspection conducted by the Cultural Affairs Agency following last April's fire at Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral found that a fire protection system at the temple has been in place for some time.

Noting that the cause of the Shuri Castle fire has yet to be determined, a Chusonji temple official said: "We hope that the authorities will identify the cause of the fire, so we can be more careful."

Meanwhile, officials at temples and shrines in Nikko, Tochigi Prefecture, voiced sympathy for the people of Okinawa.

One of them said that the castle “must have provided spiritual support for locals” and that the fire was “regrettable.”

In the wake of the Shuri Castle incident, all staff members at Rinnoji temple, part of a World Heritage site in Nikko, were urged to be more careful when using fire.

“We will take extra caution” at a time when the Nikko area is now welcoming an army of tourists in the autumn foliage season, said Shoei Imai, a senior official at the temple. With an event starting Friday in which fire will be used to cook items sold at food stalls, Imai said, “We will be very careful.”