

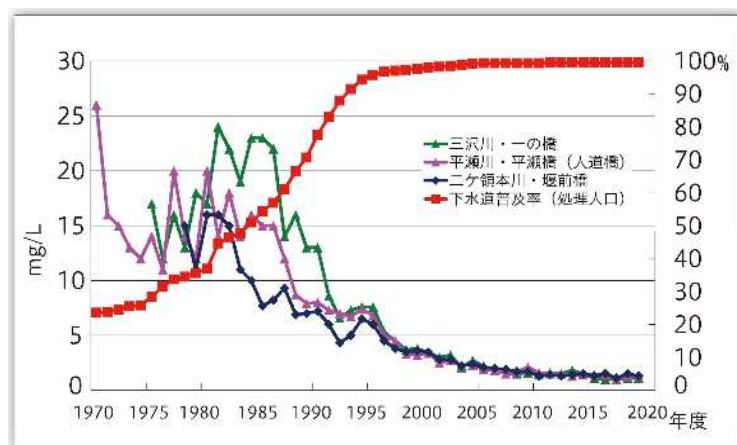
4. Emergence of New Environmental Problems (1980 onward)

Improving Water Quality

To ensure a clear understanding of water quality in Kawasaki's rivers at all times, in 1981 the City established a water quality monitoring station on the Hirase River (in Takatsu Ward). Similar monitoring stations were later added elsewhere. At the same time, the City moved forward with upgrading its sewerage and measures regarding household wastewater. The Kawasaki Pollution Research Institute, for its part, took a number of steps to raise public awareness, including preparation of pamphlets explaining how household wastewater pollutes rivers and seawater and offering seminars on the environment. Thanks to this wide range of measures, the water environment of Kawasaki improved dramatically.



Hirase River Water Quality Monitoring Station



Annual mean biochemical oxygen demand in the Tama River drainage system and sewerage diffusion rate



Family seminars on appreciation of the waterfront

Approaches to Traffic-Related Environmental Problems

As automobile traffic volumes increased, air pollution caused by nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM) included in exhaust gas presented a serious problem. At this time, though regulations on factories and workplaces had been implemented, measures against vehicle exhaust lagged.

To address this issue, in 1991 the City drafted the Kawasaki city Automotive Pollution Prevention Plan. Measures implemented through the plan included promotion of adoption of low-pollution vehicles, advancement of measures to reduce traffic volumes, and "green wall" projects to plant trees along roads with heavy traffic volumes. In partnership with other municipalities in the Tokyo area, the City of Kawasaki promoted initiatives such as "no-car Wednesdays."



Road congestion in the 1980s



Ikegami Automobile Exhaust monitoring Station

Pollution Lawsuit in Kawasaki

In 1982 a group of citizens who had suffered illness due to pollution and their heirs filed suit against the Japanese government, the Metropolitan Expressway Authority (now Metropolitan Expressway Co., Ltd.) and 12 private-sector companies. The plaintiffs demanded an end to pollution, calling on the defendants to comply with environmental standards on sulfur dioxide, NO_x and PM and to provide compensation for those who had become ill or died as a result of pollution. From the first lawsuit in 1982 to the fourth, the number of plaintiffs grew to 440.

The case dragged on until 1996, when a settlement was reached in one of the suits, the Nishiyodogawa pollution lawsuit. Prompted by this settlement, the private companies settled in 1996, followed by the Metropolitan Expressway Authority and the Japanese government in 1999. After the resolution, the patients and their families and supporters continued their anti-pollution activities. The City of Kawasaki provided relief on medical expenses for all asthma sufferers.

4. Emergence of Further Environmental Problems (1980 onward)

Declaration of a State of Emergency on household waste

Kawasaki's population and economy continued to grow, and so did the waste volume. In 1990 the waste volume discarded in Kawasaki threatened to exceed the capacity of its waste incineration and treatment facilities. This predicament prompted the City of Kawasaki to declare a "state of emergency on household waste," calling on citizens and businesses to cooperate in reducing the amount of waste they generated. At the same time, the city gradually introduced a system of sorting empty glass bottles and PET bottles for collection, and promoted to reduce the amount of waste incinerated. This initiative marked the turning point when City of Kawasaki switched from a policy of incinerating all waste to policies aimed at fostering a recycling-oriented society.

In 1995 Kawasaki city introduced a system that some part of general waste was shipped by train for the first time in Japan. This innovation enabled waste to transport efficiently without being impacted by the flow of road traffic, and additionally contribute to reduce automobile exhaust.



Flyer at that time of 1990s



Eco-friendly train transport of household



Container used for train transport of household waste

Measures Against New Environmental Issues

Late 1980s, public attention turned to be focused on environmental pollution problems caused by chemical substances generated from the advanced high-tech industries. To grapple with the new chemical substances these industries generated, the City of Kawasaki once again conducted an environmental survey, partnered with business operators on preventive measures, and took steps to disseminate accurate information and raise public awareness about chemicals.

At the same time, global environmental issues such as damage to the ozone layer and global warming became international concern. Taking aim at becoming "a city where people and the environment coexist in harmony," in 1994 the City of Kawasaki drafted the Kawasaki city Basic Environmental Plan. The Basic Environmental Plan spelled out the City's posture on measures to counteract global warming and acid rain and to protect the ozone layer. In particular, the plan stipulated concrete indices for carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, which are a factor in global warming, as well as efforts to reduce them.