

Preventing Fire

With their thatched roofs and wooden walls, the gassho-style houses in Ogimachi are highly vulnerable to fire. In the past, if one of the structures caught fire, the risk of flames spreading to nearby houses and throughout the village was high, and multiple conflagrations did, in fact, occur in previous centuries. Residents nowadays work together to prevent such disasters, taking turns patrolling the village in the evenings and reminding their neighbors to be careful with flammable materials. The most recognizable community firefighting action in Ogimachi is the annual testing of the village's roughly 50 deluge guns, which are placed under triangular shelters here and there between the gassho-style homes and are jointly operated by the residents of the houses on both sides of the fixture. When the valves are opened, these devices can be aimed to create screens of water between the structures, preventing the spread of fire from one house to the other. The sight of the deluge guns being tested all at once, which is usually done in mid-autumn, can be impressive when seen from the Ogimachi Castle Site Scenic Lookout.