

Miyahara Water Purification Plant

The Miyahara Water Purification Plant was completed in 1890 and is the oldest water purification plant in western Japan. In 1886, the Imperial Navy designated Kure as the future location of a major naval base. Operation of the base would require large quantities of water for supplying the ships and for use in shipbuilding, so the development of water supply facilities became a top priority. The Navy began construction of the Nikō Basin Intake in 1888, and it was finished a year later. Kure was the third city in the nation, after Yokohama and Hakodate, to build the infrastructure for a modern water supply system. Water from the Nikō river is treated at the Miyahara Water Purification Plant and then transported to the city of Kure through iron pipes that are pressurized to prevent outside contamination.

The plant is located on a hill at the foot of Mt. Yasumi and draws water from the Nikō River through the Nikō Basin Intake, located 4 kilometers away. The plant covers an area 37 meters wide and 44.4 meters in length, and the system can hold a total volume of 8,000 cubic meters of water. It supplies tap water to city residents as well as industrial water to factories and other facilities.

The National Hospital Organization Kure Medical Center, originally established in 1889 as a Navy hospital, is located near the Miyahara Water Purification Plant. The hospital was specifically built near the plant to ensure a reliable supply of clean water. Due to the scale of the naval base, the new water supply infrastructure was initially reserved for naval use only. After Honjō Dam was completed in 1918, a portion of its water supply was redirected for municipal use. Until water was diverted from the reservoir at Honjō Dam, residents of Kure had relied mainly on well water that was prone to contamination.

The original shed-style distribution reservoir was built in 1890, and a sedimentation tank was added in 1901 and a slow sand filter system in 1923. All three of these fixtures were used continuously until the early twenty-first century. The plant's second sedimentation tank, added in 1985, was remodeled into a solar sludge-drying bed, but much of its original structure has been preserved.

The Miyahara Water Purification Plant is not open to the public, but the exterior can be viewed from outside the grounds. The building's façade and roof were built with red brick, an architectural style introduced by the British Navy. In 1998, the national government designated the Miyahara Water Purification Plant a Tangible Cultural Property.