

New Fields Added to the Specified Skilled Worker System: What to Prepare for Now

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One Asia Lawyers Group

[Asia-Global Mobility Practice Team]

1. Introduction

The Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) system, established in 2019 to address Japan's labor shortage, has gradually expanded the fields it covers since its creation. In recent years, the logistics, resource circulation, and linen supply industries have continued to face serious labor shortages, and expectations for the utilization of foreign workers in these fields have grown.

In light of this situation, the government has newly added the three fields of "Logistics Warehousing," "Resource Circulation," and "Linen Supply" to the Specified Skilled Worker system, effective from 2027. This newsletter explains the overview of the three newly added fields and the matters that companies considering the acceptance of foreign workers should prepare for now.

2. Overview of the New Three Fields

Background to the Addition of the New Fields

The logistics warehousing, resource circulation, and linen supply industries in particular are facing expanding demand for their services, while securing domestic personnel has become extremely difficult, making countermeasures against the chronic labor shortage an urgent priority. By recognizing the "Specified Skilled Worker" status of residence for personnel with a certain level of skill and Japanese language proficiency, the government aims to help ease the labor shortage across these industries as a whole.

All Three New Fields Are Currently Limited to Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1)

At present, all three fields are covered only under Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1); Type 2 has not yet been decided.

	① Logistics Warehousing Field	② Resource Circulation Field	③ Linen Supply Field
Current Situation	In the logistics industry, the expansion of the EC (e-commerce) market and responses to the "2024 Problem" have driven a chronic labor shortage centered on in-warehouse operations.	The sector faces structural challenges such as an aging workforce, an exodus of younger workers, and rising demand for recycling and waste-processing services.	Demand is increasing due to the recovery of the tourism industry driven by growth in inbound visitors to Japan, as well as demand from medical and welfare facilities.
Target Business Operations	A range of operations within logistics warehouses, including the receipt and dispatch of goods, sorting, picking, packing, and inventory management	Intermediate treatment of waste disposal (a series of processes including "acceptance," "sorting," "disposal," and "shipping out") ※ Covers both general	A range of operations involving linen items used in hotels and hospitals, including receiving, sorting, washing, drying, finishing, inspection, bundling, and shipping

		waste and industrial waste	
Expected Number of Foreign Workers to Be Accepted (by the end of March 2029)	18,300	4,500	7,700

3. Differences in the State of Readiness Across Fields

	① Logistics Warehousing Field	② Resource Circulation Field	③ Linen Supply Field
Skill Level	Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1) Skills Evaluation Test ※ Test implementation details are being prepared	Resource Circulation Field Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1) Evaluation Test	Linen Supply Field Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1) Evaluation Test ※ Test implementation details are being prepared. ※ Those who have successfully completed Technical Intern Training (Type 2) in this field are exempt from the test.
Japanese Language Ability	Japanese language ability equivalent to A2 or higher, as assessed by the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) (N4 or above, etc.)	“the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic)” or “the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)” ※ Detailed rankings for each test have not yet been finalized, but a level equivalent to A2.2 under the “JF Standard for Japanese-Language Education” is expected.	“the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) level A2.2 or higher”, or “the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) N4 or higher”
Procedures for Joining the Council	Details not yet finalized	Confirmation will be conducted through both documentary review and on-site inspection (certification as an excellent host organization). ※ The specific process for joining and the items to be confirmed have not yet been finalized	Already published on the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) website. After applying to join via the application form, applicants will receive an email with instructions on the required documents, which are then submitted by email. Once MHLW completes its confirmation, a membership certificate is sent by email to the person in charge.

(1) Logistics Warehousing Field

Compared to the resource circulation and linen supply fields, statistics show that the labor shortage in this field is approximately 2.7 to 3.2 times greater, reflecting the larger scale of foreign worker acceptance in this field.¹

(2) Resource Circulation Field

This field covers only intermediate treatment operations; please note that collection and transport drivers and final disposal operations are outside its scope. In addition, with respect to joining the council, organizations wishing to join must be certified not only through documentary review but also through an on-site inspection. Please also note that on-site inspections are conducted periodically both before and after the acceptance of foreign workers, and that if certification is not granted following such an inspection, the acceptance requirements for foreign workers will no longer be met².

(3) Linen Supply Field

The linen supply field has already accepted foreign workers under the Technical Intern Training Program, and its operational system is more advanced than the other two fields.

(4) About the Japanese Language Proficiency Test

For fields and categories in which the Japanese language proficiency required for “Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1)” is “the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese” or “the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (N4 or above),” foreign nationals who have successfully completed Technical Intern Training (Type 2) are, in principle, exempt from the Japanese language test regardless of the job type or work performed during their technical intern training. Furthermore, if the work to be performed is found to be related to the job type or work performed during Technical Intern Training (Type 2), the skills test is also waived. That said, because the “Logistics Warehousing” and “Resource Circulation” fields do not exist under the current Technical Intern Training Program, please continue to check the website of the competent authority for updates on whether the test-exemption system will apply to these fields, among other matters.

4. Relationship with the Training and Employment System

Regarding the three newly added fields, the relationship with the “Training and Employment” system, which is scheduled to begin in 2027 and was covered in our previous newsletter, has been clarified, and a transition route from the Training and Employment system to the Specified Skilled Worker system is expected to be established. Companies considering the acceptance of foreign workers should note that competition for hiring may make it difficult to secure the personnel needed as “Specified Skilled Workers,” and may therefore need to consider developing the necessary systems and obtaining certification as a host organization under the “Training and Employment” system as well.³

¹ Immigration Services Agency of Japan website, Materials Distributed at the 12th Expert Meeting on the Basic Policy and Field-Specific Operational Guidelines for the Specified Skilled Worker System and the Training and Employment System, Document 2 (accessed: July 27, 2026) https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/03_00167.html

² “3. On the Acceptance of Foreign Workers in the Resource Circulation Field” (Ministry of the Environment website, The Specified Skilled Worker System and the Training and Employment System in the Resource Circulation Field <https://www.env.go.jp/recycle/waste/foreigner.html>)

³ “The Implementation of the Training and Employment System: Impact and Response Strategies for Foreign Worker Acceptance

5. What Companies Considering Acceptance Should Check Now

Although detailed operational rules for some fields have not yet been finalized, we set out below what can be done starting now.

STEP1. Confirm Whether Your Company and Its Business Operations Are Covered

Even within the same industry, some companies may fall outside the scope of coverage, and in some cases only part of the business may be covered. It is therefore necessary to first confirm whether your company and its business operations qualify.

STEP2. Confirm the Requirements for Becoming a Training and Employment Host Organization

Specified Skilled Worker candidates may be in competition with other companies, making it difficult to secure the necessary personnel. Accepting Training and Employment workers may broaden the pool of applicants, so it is worth considering as an option. To become a Training and Employment host organization, a company must submit a Training and Employment Plan and obtain certification, and must also provide Japanese language learning support after acceptance; it is advisable to confirm and prepare any other necessary requirements and internal systems in advance. That said, because the Training and Employment system, unlike the Technical Intern Training Program, permits job transfers, there is a risk of talent outflow similar to that under the Specified Skilled Worker system. In any case, to become a company chosen by foreign workers, it is essential to review the on-site acceptance framework and put in place multilingual manuals, improved working conditions, and other measures.

STEP3. Prepare a Support System and Join the Field-Specific Council

When accepting Specified Skilled Worker (Type 1) personnel, host companies are obligated to formulate and implement a support plan. In addition, if the company has not accepted, within the past two years, a foreign national holding a working status such as Technical Intern Training, Specified Skilled Worker, or Engineer/Specialist in Humanities/International Services, it must outsource support to a Registered Support Organization, and should consider in advance which organization to use. Host companies are also required to join the council established by the competent authority for each field, and should periodically check that authority's website for the timing and procedures for joining. In addition, because eligibility is also assessed based on legal compliance, such as proper enrollment in social insurance and the absence of violations of labor-related laws and regulations, companies should confirm that they meet the acceptance requirements.

STEP4. Prepare a Living Support System

Securing housing in Japan and providing living support are also necessary. Preparations for a living support system should be made before, or in parallel with, the start of recruitment.

6. Summary

The three newly added fields—“Logistics Warehousing,” “Resource Circulation,” and “Linen Supply”—each differ in the progress of their institutional preparations and in their characteristics. As further details of the system will continue to be announced, companies considering the acceptance of foreign workers should check the latest information on the relevant competent authority’s website, and should proceed with preparations now — joining councils, developing internal systems, and the like — so as to be ready to hire once the system takes effect.

In practice, it is often the internal preparations — putting in place the acceptance framework — rather than recruitment itself, that take the most time. We encourage companies to prepare well in advance, so as to avoid having to revise a support plan after recruitment has ended, or scrambling at the last minute because the living-support system is not yet ready.

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<Authors>



Kazuki Sano

**Partner Attorney (Japanese Law), One Asia Lawyers
Representative, Myanmar Office**

Certified Foreign Employment Labor Specialist

Worked for three years from 2013 at M&A Advisory Co., Ltd. in Thailand, primarily supporting market entry, registration filings, and legal support. Joined One Asia Lawyers upon its founding in 2016, working in the Myanmar and Malaysia offices. Married a Myanmar national in 2019 and currently resides in Myanmar. As Representative of the Myanmar office, provides advice across the full range of Asian legal practice.

Contact: kazuki.sano@oneasia.legal

	Yasuaki Nanba Partner Attorney, One Asia Osaka Office In Charge of the Philippines Leader, Asia ESG/SDGs Practice Group After approximately seven years at a law firm in Osaka, went independent and was involved in law firm management, handling human resources and labor matters, dispute resolution, intellectual property, insolvency, construction disputes, condominium management, general civil matters, and criminal cases for domestic companies, as well as municipal work such as serving as an advisor for the City of Osaka's debt collection and management. Also served for several years as an assistant to a comprehensive external auditor and received an award for outstanding contribution. Joined One Asia in September 2021. Heads the Philippines team and has been stationed in the Philippines since 2023, providing broad-ranging advice on legal research for market entry into the Philippines, human resources and labor, various compliance matters, M&A, debt collection, withdrawal support, and ESG-related matters. Recipient of the APAC Insider Best Labor Dispute Lawyer 2024 award Contact: yasuaki.nanba@oneasia.legal
	Yusuke Tomofuji One Asia Lawyers Group New York State Attorney / Qualified Manager of Foreign Trainees Has extensive experience handling international matters in-house at corporations for many years, covering a broad range including sales contracts, dispute resolution, construction contracts, and business withdrawals. In recent years, has handled numerous matters relating to the legal aspects of dispatching personnel from various Asian countries to Japan. Member of the AI Legal Practice Group. Graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School (USA). Joined One Asia in 2023. Contact: yusuke.tomofuji@oneasia.legal
	Yuki Kurosaki One Asia Lawyers, Tokyo Office Certified Fraud Examiner / Qualified Manager of Foreign Trainees Global Whistleblowing Hotline General Manager Registered as an attorney in December 2011. After working at a law firm serving clients ranging from individuals to small and medium-sized enterprises, moved to a domestic law firm serving clients ranging from small and medium-sized enterprises to large corporations, where he handled corporate disputes and general corporate legal matters (primarily company law, labor law, bankruptcy law, the Telecommunications Business Act, and the Act on Specified Commercial Transactions). Subsequently spent approximately two years at the Disclosure Statements Inspection Division of the Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission Secretariat, investigating improper accounting treatment and internal control deficiencies at listed companies, and was involved in a wide range of matters including fictitious transactions, circular transactions, loan transactions disguised as genuine transactions, and off-balance-sheet consolidation arrangements. Currently handles a broad range of matters including litigation and other dispute resolution, general corporate legal work, and legal review of various contracts. Contact: yuki.kurosaki@oneasia.legal

**Takumi Hamada****One Asia Lawyers, Osaka Office**

Registered as an attorney in 2019 and joined a law firm in Tokyo, where he handled startups, labor matters (management side), M&A transactions, and ADR, among other matters. Subsequently joined a law firm in Osaka in 2022, where he has handled labor matters (management side), M&A transactions across various domestic industries, cross-border M&A transactions, international business restructuring, shareholder derivative suits, shareholders' meeting support, matters relating to the Unfair Competition Prevention Act, requests for disclosure of sender information, and legal consultations for retainer clients. Joined the Osaka Office of One Asia Law Firm in January 2025; going forward will work with members of other offices to handle corporate legal matters broadly, both domestically and internationally.

Member, CSR Employment and Labor Research Group

Contact: takumi.hamada@oneasia.legal

**Akihiro Kawashima****One Asia Lawyers, Osaka Office****Qualified Manager of Foreign Trainees**

Joined a law firm specializing in construction disputes in 2021, gaining practical experience primarily in construction disputes and labor disputes (management side), before moving to the Osaka Office of One Asia Lawyers. Continues to focus on construction and real estate-related legal work as a core practice area while expanding into other fields.

Contact: akihiro.kawashima@oneasia.legal