Broadcasters Tsunami Emergency Guidebook

Washington Military Department
Emergency Management Division

ISSUE DATE: APRIL 2006
Introduction

The Pacific Coast of Washington is at risk from tsunamis. These destructive waves can be caused by coastal or submarine landslides or volcanism, but they are most commonly caused by large submarine earthquakes.

Tsunamis are generated when these geologic events cause large, rapid movements in the seafloor, displacing the water column above. This swift change creates a series of high-energy waves that radiate outward like pond ripples. Local offshore tsunamis would strike the adjacent shorelines within minutes. The Pacific Coast is at risk both from locally and centrally generated tsunamis.

Tsunami waves can continue for hours. The first wave can be followed by others a few minutes or a few hours later, and the later waves are commonly larger.

Warnings

When an earthquake that might generate a Pacific Coast tsunami is detected, the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center calculates the danger to the northeast Pacific Coast and notifies the communities at risk. If the earthquake occurs off our coast, however, there may be time to send out hazard warnings and may make alert and notification systems inoperable. The first waves could arrive within 30 minutes of the earthquake. The only tsunami warning might be the earthquake itself.

Broadcasters

This guidebook provides a concise overview of the notification process used to send tsunami alerts to public information broadcasters, local jurisdictions and the public. It includes a Tsunami Warning Flow Chart that shows how information is sent to broadcasters, a contact list of tsunami experts who can provide credible tsunami information during a tsunami event, and Washington coastal community maps of regions most susceptible to tsunamis.

Two DVDs accompany this guidebook (located in the binder sleeve): Tsunamis in Washington (running time: 4:32:26); and U.S. National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program Selected Interviews.

Coastal Tsunami Inundation Maps

Washington coast maps appear in geographic order. Each map includes a symbol key that pinpoints tsunami hazard zones, evacuation routes, and safer assembly areas for people.
Tsunami Warning Flow Chart

HOW THE TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM WORKS

West Coast / Alaska Tsunami Warning Center (Palmer, Alaska)

NWS sends Tsunami EAS Message
State EOC and
Local Jurisdictions and
Broadcasters and
Citizens (via NOAA Weather Radio)

State EOC sends (via EAS) Prescribed Message

EMD/COUNTY TSUNAMI WARNING
To: Activate AHAB Radios
Local Jurisdictions
Broadcasters
Citizens (via NOAA Weather Radio)

State EOC sends (via EAS) Prescribed Message
COUNTY EVACUATION
(This message sent as requested by the County)
To: Activate AHAB Radios
Local Jurisdictions
Broadcasters
Citizens (via NOAA Weather Radio)
Local Subject Matter Expert Contacts

**TSUNAMI NUMERICAL MODELING**

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**TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER**

**West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center**

**PALMER, ALASKA**
Tel: (907) 745-4212
(Warning Center)

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA**
Tel: (907) 271-4767
(NWS Alaska Region PIO)

**EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (EAS)**

**National Weather Service**

**SEATTLE**
Tel: (206) 526-6857
(unlisted media line)

**PORTLAND**
Tel: (503) 261-9248
(unlisted media line)

**Washington Emergency Management Division**

**DON MILLER**
Tel: (253) 512-7035
Tsunami Bulletin (Example)

From West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center

BULLETIN
PUBLIC TSUNAMI MESSAGE NUMBER 1.
NWS WEST COAST/ALASKA TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER PALMER AK
1241 PM PST SAT DEC 17 2005

... THIS MESSAGE IS FOR TEST PURPOSES TO SHOW AN EXAMPLE
WEAK MESSAGE...

... A TEST TSUNAMI WARNING IS IN EFFECT WHICH INCLUDES THE
CALIFORNIA – OREGON – WASHINGTON – BRITISH COLUMBIA AND
ALASKA COASTAL AREAS FROM POINT ARENA CALIFORNIA TO SITKA
ALASKA...

... A TEST TSUNAMI WATCH IS IN EFFECT FOR THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL
AREAS FROM POINT CONCEPTION CALIFORNIA TO POINT ARENA
CALIFORNIA AND FOR THE ALASKA COASTAL AREAS FROM SITKA
ALASKA TO YAKUTAT ALASKA...

A TSUNAMI WARNING MEANS ... ALL COASTAL RESIDENTS IN THE WATCH
AREA WHO ARE NEAR THE BEACH OR IN LOW-LYING REGIONS SHOULD MOVE
IMMEDIATELY INLAND TO HIGHER GROUND AND AWAY FROM ALL HARBORS
AND INLETS INCLUDING THOSE SHELTERED DIRECTLY FROM THE SEA.
THOSE FEELING THE EARTH SHAKE ... SEEING UNUSUAL WAVE ACTION ... OR
THE WATER LEVEL RISING OR RECEADING MAY HAVE ONLY A FEW MINUTES
BEFORE THE TSUNAMI ARRIVAL AND SHOULD EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY.
HOMES AND SMALL BUILDINGS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND
TSUNAMI IMPACTS. DO NOT STAY IN THESE STRUCTURES.

ALL RESIDENTS WITHIN THE WARNED AREA SHOULD BE ALERT FOR
INSTRUCTIONS BROADCAST FROM THEIR LOCAL CIVIL AUTHORITIES. THIS
TSUNAMI WARNING IS BASED SOLELY ON EARTHQUAKE INFORMATION —
THE TSUNAMI HAS NOT YET BEEN CONFIRMED.

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A TSUNAMI WATCH MEANS ... ALL COASTAL RESIDENTS IN THE WATCH
AREA SHOULD PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE EVACUATION. A TSUNAMI WATCH
IS ISSUED TO AN AREA WHICH WILL NOT BE IMPACTED BY THE TSUNAMI
FOR AT LEAST TWO HOURS. WATCH AREAS WILL EITHER BE UPGRADED TO
WARNING STATUS OR CANCELED.

AT 1230 PM PACIFIC STANDARD TIME ON DECEMBER 17 AN EARTHQUAKE
WITH PRELIMINARY MAGNITUDE 7.3 OCCURRED 40 MILES SOUTHEAST OF
PORT ALICE BRITISH COLUMBIA.
THIS EARTHQUAKE MAY HAVE GENERATED A TSUNAMI. IF A TSUNAMI
HAS BEEN GENERATED THE WAVES WILL FIRST REACH TOFINO BRITISH
COLUMBIA AT 127 PM PST ON DECEMBER 17. ESTIMATED TSUNAMI ARRIVAL
TIMES AND MAPS ALONG WITH SAFETY RULES AND OTHER INFORMATION
CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEB SITE: WCARTW.REH.NOAA.GOV.

TSUNAMIS CAN BE DANGEROUS WAVES THAT ARE NOT SURVIVABLE. WAVE
HEIGHTS ARE AMPLIFIED BY IRREGULAR SHORELINE AND ARE DIFFICULT
TO PREDICT. TSUNAMIS OFTEN APPEAR AS A STRONG SURGE AND MAY BE
PRECEDED BY A RECEADING WATER LEVEL. MARINERS IN WATER DEEPER
THAN 600 FEET SHOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY A TSUNAMI. WAVE HEIGHTS
WILL INCREASE RAPIDLY AS WATER DEEPENS. TSUNAMIS ARE A SERIES
OF OCEAN WAVES WHICH CAN BE DANGEROUS FOR SEVERAL HOURS AFTER
THE INITIAL WAVE ARRIVAL. DO NOT RETURN TO EVACUATED AREAS UNTIL
AN ALL CLEAR IS GIVEN BY LOCAL CIVIL AUTHORITIES.

THE PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER WILL ISSUE TSUNAMI BULLETINS
FOR HAWAII AND OTHER AREAS OF THE PACIFIC OUTSIDE CALIFORNIA /
OREGON / WASHINGTON / BRITISH COLUMBIA AND ALASKA.

ADDITIONAL BULLETINS WILL BE ISSUED HALF-HOURLY OR SOONER IF
CONDITIONS WARRANT. THE TSUNAMI WARNING AND WATCH WILL REMAIN
IN EFFECT UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION STAY TUNED
TO NOAA WEATHER RADIO ... YOUR LOCAL TV OR RADIO STATIONS ... OR SEE
THE WEB SITE: WCARTW.REH.NOAA.GOV.

THIS IS A TEST MESSAGE. DO NOT TAKE ACTION BASED ON THIS TEST
MESSAGE.

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Tsunami Bulletin (Example)

From Washington State
Emergency Operation Center

“THIS IS NOT A TEST. A TSUNAMI WARNING HAS BEEN ISSUED FOR THE COASTAL AREAS OF WASHINGTON. A TSUNAMI CAN CAUSE DANGEROUS FLOODING. IF YOU ARE IN A LOW COASTAL AREA YOU ARE AT RISK AND MUST MOVE TO HIGHER GROUND OR INLAND NOW. DO NOT RETURN UNTIL DIRECTED TO DO SO. CLOSELY MONITOR LOCAL RADIO STATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. THIS IS NOT A TEST. A TSUNAMI WARNING HAS BEEN ISSUED FOR THE COASTAL AREAS OF WASHINGTON. MOVE TO HIGHER GROUND OR INLAND NOW.”
Know the terms used by West Coast / Alaska Tsunami Warning Center

**A Tsunami Warning**
The highest level of tsunami alert.
A Tsunami Warning is issued by the Tsunami Warning Centers when a potential tsunami with significant widespread inundation is imminent or expected. Warnings alert the public that widespread, dangerous coastal flooding accompanied by powerful currents is possible and may continue for several hours after arrival of the initial wave. Warnings also alert emergency management officials to take action for the entire tsunami hazard zone. Appropriate actions to be taken by local officials may include the evacuation of low-lying coastal areas, and the repositioning of ships to deep waters when there is time to safely do so. Warnings may be updated, adjusted geographically, downgraded, or canceled. To provide the earliest possible alert, initial warnings are normally based only on seismic information.

**A Tsunami Watch**
The second highest level of tsunami alert.
A Tsunami Watch is issued by the Tsunami Warning Centers to alert emergency management officials and the public of an event that may later impact the Watch area. The Watch area may be upgraded to a Warning or Advisory (or canceled) based on updated information and analysis. Therefore, emergency management officials and the public should prepare to take action. Watches are normally issued based on seismic information without confirmation that a destructive tsunami is underway.
Know the terms used by the
West Coast / Alaska Tsunami Warning Center

A Tsunami Advisory
The third highest level of tsunami alert.
A Tsunami Advisory is issued by the Tsunami Warning Centers
due to the threat of a potential tsunami that may produce strong
currents or waves dangerous to those in or near the water.
Coastal regions historically prone to damage due to strong
currents induced by tsunamis are at the greatest risk. The threat
may continue for several hours after the arrival of the initial
wave, but significant widespread inundation is not expected
for areas under an Advisory. Appropriate actions to be taken by
local officials may include closing beaches, evacuating harbors
and marinas, and the repositioning of ships to deep waters when
there is time to safely do so. Advisories are normally updated to
continue the Advisory, expand/contract affected areas, upgrade
to a Warning, or cancel the Advisory.

Information Statement
An Information Statement is issued to inform emergency
management officials and the public that an earthquake has
occurred. In most cases, Information Statements are issued to
indicate there is no threat of a destructive tsunami affecting
the issuing Tsunami Warning Center’s Area of Responsibility
and to prevent unnecessary evacuations as the earthquake
may have been felt in coastal areas. An Information Statement
may, in appropriate situations, caution about the possibility
of destructive local tsunamis. Information Statements may be
re-issued with additional information, though normally these
messages are not updated. However, a Watch, Advisory or
Warning may be issued for the area, if necessary, after analysis
and/or updated information becomes available.
Washington Coast

Tsunami Inundation Maps appear on the following pages in geographic order beginning with Lummi Reservation

Whatcom County

Lummi Reservation
Whatcom County
Sandy Point

Jefferson County
Port Townsend

Legend:
- Tsunami Hazard zone
- Higher ground
- Evacuation route
- Walking route
- Assembly area
- Fire station

Symbol Key:
- Tsunami Hazard Zones
- Outside the Hazard Zones
- Evacuation Routes
- Community Center
- Hospital
- Assembly Area
- Police Station
- Fire Station

ISSUE UPDATE: APRIL 2007
ISSUE DATE: APRIL 2008
Clallam County

Sequim

Clallam County

Port Angeles

SYMBOL KEY
- Tsunami Hazard Zones
- Outside the Hazard Zones
- Evacuation Routes
- Community Center
- Hospital
- Assembly Area
- Police Station
- Fire Station

Strait of Juan de Fuca
W 2ND ST

W MILL ST

Port Angeles Harbor

S CEDAR ST

S LINCOLN ST

STRAT VIEW DR

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Clallam County

Angeles Point

Strait of Juan de Fuca

PLACE RD
LOWER ELWAHA RD

Clallam County

Agate Bay / Crescent Bay (Crescent Beach)

Strait of Juan de Fuca

Agate Bay
Crescent Bay

Joyce

GAMP HAYDEN RD
CRESCEANT BEACH RD
Grays Harbor County

Hoquiam / Aberdeen

Grays Harbor County

South Aberdeen / Cosmopolis

(Washington Coast, Geographic Locations of Tsunami Inundation Maps)
Tsunami Fact Sheet

What is a tsunami?
A tsunami is a series of waves typically generated by vertical displacement of the sea floor or lake bed caused by an earthquake. Tsunamis can cause significant death and destruction, with the greatest impact in areas closest to the source. The initial tsunami wave can arrive onshore within minutes of an earthquake, or up to several hours later, depending upon distance from the source.

Have we experienced a tsunami?
Yes. Tsunamis from locations across the Pacific Ocean basin and from the Cascadia Subduction Zone off the Washington coast have hit coastal communities. Tsunamis generated by sources such as an earthquake on the Seattle Fault or the eruption of Mount St. Helens struck Puget Sound and other inland waters. Tsunamis hit Washington’s shorelines in the 900-930 era, 1700, the 1890s, 1944-1953 era, 1949, 1960, 1964, and 1980.

Will a tsunami strike again?
Yes. Great earthquakes in the Pacific Ocean basin generating tsunamis that could impact Washington’s outer coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca occur at a rate of about six every 100 years. In the Cascadia Subduction Zone, there is a 10 to 14 percent chance of a magnitude 9 earthquake and tsunami in the next 50 years. A rate of occurrence for local earthquakes and landslides that generate tsunamis has not been determined.

Who is at risk?
Communities along the Pacific Coast and Strait of Juan de Fuca, including a number of coastal Indian tribes, are at greatest risk. In a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, the level of the coastal region could fall up to six feet, and tsunami waves could reach 30 feet, overtopping several low-lying coastal communities. At-risk population is more than 43,000 on the outer coast, excluding tourists and transient populations that could increase the number significantly.

Special note:
In its earthquake and tsunami potential, the Cascadia Subduction Zone resembles the Sunda Trench off the coast of Sumatra Island, Indonesia. The Sunda Trench produced giant earthquakes and tsunamis in December 2004 and March 2005 that killed more than 284,000 people and displaced another 1.1 million people in the Indian Ocean basin. Waves from the December 2004 tsunami reached 100 feet in places and traveled inland as far as five miles on Sumatra. The tsunami was so large it traveled around the world twice.

This information taken from draft update of Tsunami Hazard Profile, Washington State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan, Washington Military Department, 2006.