

National Tsunami Preparedness Week

Local News

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Posted on : March 26, 2012 at 11:44 pm

OLYMPIA, Wash. - National Tsunami Preparedness Week begins March 25, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Washington Emergency Management Division (WA-EMD) urge all citizens who live along coastlines to take the threat of tsunamis seriously. "Historical evidence shows that the West Coast has suffered many devastating tsunamis in the past," said FEMA Regional Administrator Ken Murphy. "We do not know when the next earthquake or tsunami will take place, but it will depend on our collective and individual preparedness to reduce our vulnerability. It is imperative," he continued, "that individuals and families have an emergency plan and practice it. Getting together as a family to talk about what to do before, during and after a disaster could make the difference between becoming a victim or a survivor." In some communities, traditional evacuations are not always an option. FEMA led the development of a new approach to dealing with this challenge called Tsunami Vertical Evacuation. Watch the video on how to use this new approach. This video was developed by FEMA RiskMap, FEMA Region X, WA-EMD, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP).

"Tsunamis threaten all Pacific shorelines," warned Jim Mullen, Director, WA-EMD. "We need to continue strengthening our efforts to improve our tsunami alert systems for distant tsunamis and continue aggressive public education programs that protect our citizens during local tsunamis. The risk to life is too high for people to do otherwise. Now is the time to take all the necessary measures, before it happens." Here are a few simple tips to remember. *Be Aware of Nature's Warnings: Drop, cover, and hold until the earthquake shaking stops. If you are on the coast and the earthquake shaking is hard or lasts over 20 seconds, the sea begins to recede, the water level rises rapidly or there is a loud roar from the sea, IMMEDIATELY move to higher ground or inland-preferably to 100 feet in elevation or a mile from the coast-or to the highest floor of a sturdy building, and STAY there. What to do during a Tsunami Warning for Your Area: Keep calm. Immediately move to your local tsunami shelter area using defined tsunami evacuation routes. If there are no evacuation routes defined, move to higher ground a mile inland or to the highest floor of a sturdy building, and STAY there. If you are already in a safe location, STAY there. Move on foot when possible. Do not drive. Keep roads open and clear for emergency vehicles. Pay attention to NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio and/or local broadcasts for changes and/or updates in tsunami alerts. Stay away from the coast and low-lying areas until local officials say it's safe to return to the warned area.* Tsunami warnings for distant tsunamis are broadcast over television and radio and by beach lifeguards, community sirens, text message alerts, National Weather Service tsunami warning center Web sites, and on NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards; however, earthquake shaking on the coast may be the only warning preceding a tsunami. Stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio or news broadcasts for changes in tsunami alerts. This week should serve as a crucial reminder for all to take the time to get prepared before disaster strikes. The time to learn is now. Visit www.tsunami.gov for additional information. *FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.*