

Statewide Workshop Focuses on Tsunami Debris Response

Local News

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OCEAN SHORES, Wash. - Today some 50 people representing local and tribal governments, state and federal agencies, and community organizations gathered in Ocean Shores to continue forging coordinated strategies for responding to tsunami debris.

We want to thank everybody who participated in today's planning workshop to address potential debris from the Japanese tsunami. Today we crafted a draft plan for tsunami debris coordination and response in Washington State. These plans will be refined in coming weeks and months. At this time we are utilizing a joint approach, with NOAA and other federal, state, tribal, local government, community and business partners working together to address this issue. Each agency and group will do what it does best. - Terry Egan, Planning, Exercise & Training Unit Manager for the Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division (EMD)

For example, community groups can help provide a first alert to debris that shows up on our shorelines and can continue to send volunteer work groups out to clean up manageable amounts of debris.

Meanwhile NOAA will continue to provide modeling information and spearhead monitoring efforts on marine debris, with local partners throughout the state contributing to the monitoring effort.

EMD will continue coordinating and planning with communities and tribal governments.

The U.S. Coast Guard will respond to any large debris that might cause vessel traffic and maritime safety concerns, such as the derelict boat found off the coast of Canada in March.

The Coast Guard and Washington Department of Ecology will respond to any hazardous materials on our shorelines such as unknown containers and cylinders, fuel tanks, oil drums and spilled oil.

The Washington Department of Health will continue addressing potential radiation issues.

There is more work to do. Each participant in today's workshop will bring the draft plan back to his or her agency for further refining.

Unanswered questions also remain, such as the availability of adequate funding for tsunami debris removal.

We do know that it's important for citizens to have information on who to call and what to do if they encounter debris. That's why we've produced fliers and wallet cards, which provide the contact information people need. The fliers and wallet cards are available at http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/itn01_debris.html.

We will be working diligently in the coming weeks and months to refine the efforts from today, and to monitor and prepare for potential tsunami debris impacts to Washington State.