Tsunami Debris Information

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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The March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan is a human tragedy. The disaster claimed nearly 16,000 lives, injured 6,000 people and destroyed or damaged countless buildings.

Contact Info**NOAA:**disasterdebris@noaa.gov
Dept. of Health:radtsunamidebris@doh.wa.gov
Printable Cards:
Contact Information
Flier:
What to do if you see debrisMost debris sinks, unknown amount still in Pacific OceanThe tsunami also swept approximately 5 million tons of debris into the Pacific Ocean. About 70 percent of the debris sank near Japan’s shore.It is still unknown how much of the remaining 30 percent of the debris remains afloat. The debris dispersed in the northern Pacific Ocean where it is making its way eastward, carried by currents and wind.Assessing tsunami debris, monitoring impactsThe National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is collaborating with federal, state, tribal and local partners to collect data, assess the debris, and reduce possible impacts to our coastal communities and natural resources. Ecology has been closely involved in this coordinated effort.Ecology is distributing information about whom to call when citizens encounter debris. The department has developed a flier and a wallet card; they can both be saved and printed for your use. If you see suspected tsunami debris, NOAA asks that you report it, including the specific location and associated photographs, todisasterdebris@noaa.gov.Please don’t burn any tsunami debris — burning wood or natural vegetation that has soaked in saltwater creates dangerous toxic pollution. In Washington, burning garbage is always illegal.

If hazardous materials wash ashoreIt is possible that containers with hazardous materials may wash ashore. Don’t touch these items or try to remove them.Instead, notify federal and state authorities. Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard will lead response efforts to remove any immediate threats to public health, safety and the environment.Ecology handles about 3,800 reports of oil spills and hazardous material releases and threats annually – and mounts 1,200 field responses across the state every year.To make a report, you should call both the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802 and Washington Military Department Emergency Management Division (EMD) at 1-800-OILS-911 (1-800-258-5990). Both numbers are answered 24/7.Getting word out to coastal communitiesSince January 2012, representatives from NOAA, Coast Guard, Ecology, EMD, and Washington Department of Health have conducted public presentations and taken questions about the most up-to-date tsunami debris information in:La PushNeah BayOcean ParkOcean ShoresPort AngelesSeaviewTaholahTokelandWestportScattered debris likely along Washington outer coast NOAA data and experience indicate the vision of a massive flotilla of debris headed for U.S. shores is unrealistic. A new NOAA modeling effort shows that some buoyant items may have reached the Pacific Northwest coast during winter 2011-2012. The bulk of the debris is likely still dispersed north of the main Hawaiian Islands and east of Midway Atoll.Widely scattered debris may arrive intermittently along shorelines in Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, Alaska and California for a sustained period of time. For more information, go to NOAA's Information and FAQs page.Many variables affect where the debris will go and when. Items will sink, disperse, and break up along the way, and winds and ocean currents constantly change, making it very difficult to predict an exact date and location for the debris’ arrival on our shores.NOAA is actively collecting information about tsunami debris at sea and throughout the region. Please report any sightings — with specific location and photographs if possible — to disasterdebris@noaa.gov.Debris unlikely to be radioactiveRadiation experts from Washington State Department of Health believe it is highly unlikely any of the tsunami debris is radioactive. Health has continued monitoring for radioactive contamination in our environment since March 16, 2011.If you have questions about radiation issues related to the earthquake and tsunami, please contact the Department of Health at 360-236-3300, email atradtsunamidebris@doh.wa.gov, or visit their website.Coastal communities working on tsunami response planLocal and tribal governments, state and federal agencies and community organizations are forging strategies for responding to tsunami debris that potentially could wash ashore on Washington’s beaches.This effort is designed to help coastal communities and government entities work together to monitor and clean up shoreline debris and to guide local responses in case large, hazardous or unmanageable debris items need to be removed from coastal beaches.The draft Washington state tsunami debris response plan will be refined in coming weeks and months.Human remains unlikelyThere is little chance human remains from Japan will arrive with the debris. However, if you do see something that concerns you, immediately call 9-1-1.

For More Information: Printable cards: Contact Information (www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/debris_contactcards.pdf)Flier: What to do if you see debris (www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/debris_flyer.pdf)NOAA's Marine Debris Program (http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/)NOAA Frequently Asked Questions (http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/info/japanfaqs.html#FAQ)ECOconnect blog: NOAA has best information about Japanese tsunami debris (http://ecologywa.blogspot.com/2012/02 ... st-information-about.html)Ecology News Release: *Statewide workshop focuses on tsunami debris response* (4/25/2012)