Governor Gregoire Announces State Plan to Address Tsunami Debris

Local News

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Ocean Shores, WA - Gov. Chris Gregoire today directed the state’s Military Department Emergency Management Division to lead a coordinated state effort to address potential tsunami debris floating onto Washington state beaches, and ensure Washington shores remain clean and safe.

The federal government is the ultimate lead as our state responds to tsunami debris that washes up on our beaches, but our federal partners need support to protect our coast and keep our citizens safe. There is no better agency to lead coordination than our Emergency Management Division. That agency has the experience and know-how necessary to bring groups together to address a variety of situations. - Gov. Chris GregoireState agencies already are working together on this debris issue. On April 25, 2012, 50 people representing local and tribal governments, state and federal agencies, and community organizations met in Ocean Shores to forge coordinated strategies for responding to tsunami debris.

EMD will continue working closely with the state’s Departments of Health, Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Parks, Natural Resources and other agencies as necessary, as well as the federal government and local and tribal communities and private non-profit groups.
Here the entire press conference in our KBKW On Demand section

Gregoire also announced she intends to work with the governors of Oregon, California and Alaska and our respective congressional delegations in requesting federal financial support to reimburse the state for any cleanup costs. Washington state set aside $100,000 from Ecology’s litter cleanup account to help dispose of debris.

While we expect debris to arrive slowly over the next several years, there’s a chance a major storm could wash up several thousand pounds of debris at once, that will require far more financial resources than our state has available. I’m confident our federal partners will recognize the need to ensure our beaches, our shellfish, and the livelihoods of those living on the coast are safe and protected. - Gov. Chris Gregoire
Since the March 11, 2011, tsunami in Japan, the Department of Health has continuously responded to issues of health and safety. Health officials will continue to test some debris that may be from Japan for radiation contamination. As expected, radiation tests so far have detected no contamination. Scientists say the tsunami debris was well offshore before the disaster at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima, Japan.

I want to assure citizens that we will do everything we can to keep our beaches clean and safe, our commitment must be well planned and it will be. I also want to say that the help of volunteers will be critical. I want to thank the Washingtonians who have already been picking up debris. Whether it comes from Japan or not, cleaning up the beach is a good thing to do. - Gov. Chris GregoireIf citizens find debris on beaches they think may be hazardous or contain oil, they should call

1-800-OILS-911. The Department of Ecology is poised to respond to any reports of hazardous marine debris, a service the agency already effectively performs. The Department of Fish and Wildlife will coordinate on efforts related to invasive species.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is collecting information about potential debris from the Japanese tsunami on Washington beaches. Citizens can report tsunami debris to NOAA at disasterdebris@noaa.gov.