

HAZARDS AND THREATS

TSUNAMI

Before a Tsunami

Local populations at risk must be able to recognize the signs of impending tsunami hazards and seek higher ground immediately. Communities need to be aware of what areas are likely to be impacted by tsunamis that include flooding in low lying areas. Residents need to understand the multi-hazard ramifications of very large local and distant seismic or geological occurrence(s) and the disruption(s) it will cause to the community.

Preparedness is the key to survival from such an event.

The following are disaster/emergency preparedness steps you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property from the effects of a tsunami:

To begin preparing, it is recommended by emergency management experts to do the following as familiarity may save your life:

- Create an emergency kit
- Make a family communications plan that include re-unification
- Talk to everyone in your household about what to do if a tsunami occurs
- Design an evacuation plan for your family – Be able to follow your escape route at night and during inclement weather
- You should be able to reach your “Safe Location” on foot within 15 minutes or sooner.

Practicing your plan makes the appropriate response more of a reaction, requiring less thinking during an actual emergency.

- If the school evacuation plan requires you to pick your child or children up from school or from another location. Remember and be aware telephone and other communications lines during a “Tsunami Watch” or “Tsunami Warning” may be overloaded as well as driving routes to and from school may be jammed with traffic.
- Know your community’s warning systems and disaster plans, including evacuation routes.
- Know the height of your street above sea level and the distance of your street from the coastline or other high-risk waters. Evacuation orders may be based on these numbers.

- If you are a visitor to the County of Los Angeles beaches and harbor areas, familiarize yourself with local tsunami evacuation protocols. You may be able to safely evacuate to the floor and higher in reinforced concrete structures and/or buildings.
- If an earthquake occurs and you are in a coastal area, turn on your radio to learn if a Tsunami Warning has been issued and if so, follow your disaster/emergency plan.

Quick Tsunami Disaster Preparedness Steps:

- Never go down to the beach, harbor or coastline area to watch for a tsunami. **WHEN YOU CAN SEE THE WAVE YOU ARE TOO CLOSE TO ESCAPE.** Tsunamis can move faster than a person can run.
- If you are near the coastline, an earthquake may be your only warning of an approaching tsunami, so it is very important to respond quickly.
- If you are at the beach and/or harbor area and you notice the water has pulled back or run out, creating a vast expanse of exposed beach flooring, this is a warning that a tsunami may be imminent.
- Stay away from coastal and low-lying areas. Waves might continue for several hours and travel several times faster than you can walk, run or drive.
- Never go to the beach, harbor or coastline areas to watch for or surf a tsunami wave.

Additional Tsunami(s) Online References:

- National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
<http://www.tsunami.noaa.gov/prepare.html>
- County of Los Angeles Emergency Survival Guide (pages 83-85)
<http://lacounty.gov> or <http://lacoa.org>
- Emergency Survival Program
<http://www.espfocus.org>