



PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM Historical Book
UNESCO/IOC – NOAA International Tsunami Information Center (ITIC)
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Overview

Following the Pacific wide tsunami of 1960 that killed two thousand people in Chile and then, up to a day later, hundreds in Hawaii, Japan, and the Philippines, concerned countries met to discuss and draft the requirements for an international tsunami warning system. In 1965, the United Nations, through the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, formed the International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific (ICG/ITSU) to provide warnings and education to Pacific nations. In 2005, it was renamed the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/PTWS) to reflect the intergovernmental commitment needed to comprehensively address tsunami risk reduction.

Tsunamis have arguably been the only natural disaster to be addressed effectively at an international scale. Now 50 years in existence, the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific is an example of how through international cooperation, the tsunami hazard impact has been mitigated by properly evaluating in real time potentially tsunamigenic earthquakes, by issuing timely informational bulletins and warnings, and by advocating for strong programs in education and awareness. Member States and organizations, under the framework of the IOC, have built up the System over the decades through their generous contribution of resources and knowledge. The USA's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center serves as the operational headquarters, working with Japan's Northwest Pacific Tsunami Advisory Center and the USA National Tsunami Warning Center, to serve the 46 countries of the Pacific. The ITIC, an IOC-NOAA joint partnership with support from Chile, assists PTWS Member States to strengthen their national systems. Over history, 76% of the world's deadly tsunamis have occurred in the Pacific, including most recently the 2009 Samoa tsunami that caused deaths in three neighboring island countries, Samoa, American Samoa, USA, and Tonga, the 2010 Chile tsunami that caused deaths locally, and the devastating 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

To continue to sustain awareness on the dangers of tsunamis, and to educate the public on how the Pacific Tsunami Warning System works to alert the public of an approaching tsunami, the ITIC and NGDC, with support from the US Tsunami Program, has published a book to document the "Pacific Tsunami Warning System (1965-2015): A Half-Century of Protecting the Pacific. The Book will be available for the 26th Session of the ICG/PTWS (April 22-24, 2015) and the preceding International Tsunami Symposium: "Making the Pacific Ready for the Tsunami Threat" (April 20-21, 2015)." This Book, which includes reflections from involved participants and countries, important tsunamis and events, a history of warning evolution, and a chronicle of scientific and technological development and innovation supporting warning and response, provides a foundation of activities and accomplishments upon which to build for the future. The compilations contained can serve as both a reminder of past successes, and a roadmap for the challenges ahead.

For more information, contact Dr. Laura Kong, Director, UNESCO-IOC / NOAA ITIC, laura.kong@noaa.gov, or Paula Dunbar, NOAA National Geophysical Data Center, paula.dunbar@noaa.gov

Pacific Tsunami Warning System

A Half-Century of Protecting the Pacific

1965-2015



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