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**NOAA Announces New Local Tsunami Bulletins Designed to  
Improve Safety for Hawaii Residents and Visitors**  
*Products to be Tested during Tsunami Awareness Month Exercise*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Richard H. Hagemeyer Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) is testing new local tsunami warning products during a statewide tsunami exercise today. NOAA is an agency of the Commerce Department.

"There is very little warning time for local tsunamis," said Chip McCreery, PTWC director. "A local tsunami can strike the coast immediately or within minutes. Our new products have content designed for the public and for fast dissemination. We are trying to get effective, life-saving information to people along coastlines at risk as quickly as possible after a potentially tsunamigenic local earthquake occurs."

Participating in the exercise along with NOAA's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, International Tsunami Information Center, and National Weather Service Honolulu Forecast Office, are Hawaii state and county civil defense agencies, state and county warning points, State Department of Education, American Red Cross, Hawaii Tourism Authority, Pacific Tsunami Museum, and Civil Air Patrol.

"The statewide tsunami exercise will focus on Hawaii's ability to respond to a locally generated tsunami," said Ed Texeira, vice director of state civil defense. "It provides an opportunity for participants to review their local tsunami response procedures and to promote preparedness."

The exercise simulates a 7.6 earthquake on the south Kona coast of the Big Island which generates a statewide tsunami. In this scenario, the coastlines of all Islands are impacted. Many harbors experience considerable wave action and strong currents. Damage to harbor facilities and boats is widely reported.

The Big Island receives the most damage. In particular, the Kona coastline is devastated and many areas are completely flooded by a series of waves. The earthquake ground shaking also causes widespread structural and infrastructure damage throughout the Island. Power and communications are completely knocked out. Numerous landslides are triggered. Segments of highways and roadways crumble and fires break out in industrial districts.

In Maui County, earthquake ground shaking causes moderate to severe damage to buildings. Power and communications are disrupted. On Oahu, buildings sway but none are structurally damaged. Power and communications are disrupted. On Kauai, no significant ground shaking damage is reported.

Following the exercise, a review and evaluation will be conducted by all participants. “The exercise will help us improve our tsunami warning procedures and products and be more prepared for the next real event,” said McCreery. “The last local tsunami in which lives were lost occurred in 1975 near Halape on the Big Island. Almost two generations have grown up in Hawaii since then with little experience or knowledge of tsunamis. It is an educational challenge.”

Indeed, according to the latest Census figures, xxx times more people live in the inundation areas than in 1975. (Insert quote by Census Bureau director Louis Kincannon)

“Here’s what every family should do to prepare,” said John Cummings, Oahu civil defense education and training officer.

“(1) Look in the white pages of the Verizon phone books for each Island to find out if your residence or workplace is in an evacuation zone. During a tsunami, if you are in an evacuation zone, immediately go inland or to higher ground. If you are not in an evacuation zone, stay put and do not congest the highways.

(2) Prepare an emergency kit to last for three days or until the “all clear” is announced.

(3) Decide on a place to meet.

- (4) Select a relative in another state as a point of contact where all family members can check in.
- (5) Never go to the coastline to watch or to surf – you cannot surf a tsunami wave.”

Tsunami Awareness Month commemorates the destructive April 1, 1946, tsunami in which 159 people in Hawaii lost their lives. Activities and public events are held to promote tsunami preparedness. For a list of events, visit:

<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/itic/media.htm>

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