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Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency

Do You #KnowTheSigns?

Meeting, Proclamation Mark the Start of Tsunami Awareness Month in Hawai'i

For Immediate Release: Friday, March 31, 2023

Release No. 2023-011

HONOLULU — Emergency managers from across the state gathered at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) and International Tsunami Information Center (ITIC) to discuss the latest issues in protecting our state, as Governor Josh Green, M.D. on Friday proclaimed April as Tsunami Awareness Month in Hawai'i.

The Governor's proclamation was delivered to the gathering at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Inouye Regional Center (IRC), home to PTWC and ITIC, on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor on Friday, March 31.

Representatives from the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) and county emergency management agencies attended to discuss tsunami alert and warning protocols, the 2022 tsunami generated by the massive volcanic explosion in Tonga, and other concerns related to protecting against the tsunami hazard.

"Tsunamis can strike with very little warning and cause enormous destruction," said James DS. Barros, Administrator of HI-EMA. "We observe Tsunami Awareness Month every year in Hawai'i, starting on the anniversary of the deadly April Fools' Day tsunami that caused so much sorrow and damage to our state in 1946."

Tsunamis are Hawaii's deadliest natural disaster. A total of 293 people have been killed since 1900, including 158 from the 1946 disaster alone, most of them on the Big Island and in and around Hilo. The 1946 tsunami arrived without warning and led to the development of PTWC as the first tsunami warning system in the U.S.

Luke Meyers, disaster management coordinator for Gov. Green, presented the Tsunami Awareness Month proclamation to the emergency management event on the Governor's behalf.

Tsunamis are generated by earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, or other powerful events that forcibly move large amounts of water. They can produce a wall of water 50 feet high or more, and travel hundreds of yards inland when they reach shore. Hawai'i

faces hazards both from distant tsunamis, which take hours to reach the state, and local tsunamis which can arrive in minutes after an earthquake within the state. “Tsunamis can’t be predicted,” said Dr. Laura Kong, director of ITIC. “We don’t know when and where the next big one will occur, so we need to be prepared. Get Tsunami Ready Now! Outlines simple and important actions for all of us to do as part of Tsunami Awareness Month.”

“Protecting lives and property from tsunamis is a group effort, and meeting to talk story with our emergency management partners today will help us all to respond more quickly and effectively in a real emergency,” added Dr. Chip McCreery, director of PTWC.

As part of the Tsunami Awareness Month observance, HI-EMA will purchase ad time for its “Don’t Fool Around; Get to High Ground!” public service announcement (PSA) campaign.

The colorful animated PSAs focus on the natural warning signs of a local tsunami – strong shaking, a roaring noise from the ocean, and water receding from the beach – that may indicate that a tsunami is approaching even before the warning sirens sound. If residents or visitors near shore notice any of those signs, they should IMMEDIATELY move away from the coast; if they can’t retreat to higher terrain, they may also seek shelter in a sturdy building on the fourth floor or higher.

Other events are planned for Tsunami Awareness Month by the counties and the Pacific Tsunami Museum in Hilo. For details visit the [event calendar](#).

For one-stop information on Hawai’i tsunamis, visit hawaiiitsunami.org, or contact ITIC at itic.tsunami@noaa.gov.

Video clips and still photos of the event at PTWC are available to the media upon request. Please call (808) 733-4300, ext. 5, or email hawaiiema@hawaii.gov to request them.

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