

## **Exercise Pacific Wave '06**

The Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/PTWS), will be conducting its first end-to-end Pacific-wide tsunami exercise for the Pacific Ocean on 16-17 May 2006. Regional and national tsunami warning systems in the Pacific and globally must maintain a high level of readiness so as to be able to efficiently and effectively act to provide for the public's safety during fast-onset and rapidly-evolving natural disasters such as tsunamis. To maintain this high state of operational readiness, and especially for infrequent events such as tsunamis, emergency agencies should regularly practice their response procedures to ensure that vital communication links work seamlessly and that agencies and response personnel know the roles that they will need to play during an actual event.

The 2004 Indonesia earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami brought to the world's attention the urgent need to be better prepared. Accordingly, the intent of the Pacific-wide exercise is to motivate countries to review and test their response procedures, and for the PTWS system to evaluate its operations with the goal of identifying weak areas where improvement is needed to increase overall preparedness. A report on the exercise will be made by the ICG/PTWS Chair to the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) Executive Council in late June 2006.

The exercise will place all Pacific Basin countries into a Tsunami Warning that will require countries to practice its emergency response decision-making for the arrival of a destructive Pacific-wide tsunami upon its shores, and depending on the country, be conducted to the step just prior to public notification. The exercise will take focus on two components of the warning system: the evaluation and issuance of the warning message by tsunami warning centres, and the national and/or local response and warning dissemination mechanism once a warning is received by emergency authorities.

During the first stage, the scenario of a destructive tsunami crossing the Pacific will be simulated through communication of messages by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) and other warning centres, including sub-regional centres such as the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center (WC/ATWC) and the Japan Meteorological Agency's Northwest Pacific Tsunami Advisory Center (NWPTAC). Tsunami bulletins will be transmitted from the tsunami warning centres to 7x24 Tsunami Focal Points and/or designated national emergency authorities responsible for tsunami emergency response. A compressed exercise time schedule is planned in order to complete the drill in a timely manner that will allow maximum engagement by all stakeholders.

In the second stage, decision-making and notification down to the last stage before public notification should be simulated. This stage should be conducted the same day or within the following days and include notifications to the emergency management authorities of a single coastal community so as to sufficiently practice the end-to-end process. Countries plan to taken special care to ensure that the public is not inadvertently alarmed.

All countries of the Pacific are being strongly encouraged to participate in the exercise. The exercise is being considered the first drill of what will be regular schedule of future exercises. A task team chaired by Australia and comprised of representatives from the PTWC, WC/ATWC, NWPTAC, ITIC, Australia, Chile, France, Fiji, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Samoa, and the USA, is coordinating 'Exercise Pacific Wave 06'. For more information, please contact contact Mr. Mark Sullivan, Emergency Management Australia, [TSUNAMI@ema.gov.au](mailto:TSUNAMI@ema.gov.au), Telephone: +61 262 564 693.