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Test of Pacific Ocean tsunami warning system

Countries bordering the Pacific Ocean will test their readiness to face a major tsunami event in a simulated alert exercise from 2 to 6 February. This will allow them to assess the efficiency of the Pacific Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System established under the auspices of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

More than 40 countries will take part in the exercise named [PacWave15](#). They will be able to choose one of six scenarios concerning earthquakes off the shores of southern and northern Japan; Tonga; Philippines; Chile/Peru; or Colombia/Ecuador. The exercise is designed to assess the effectiveness of the communication systems used for warnings. Messages will be issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) in Hawaii and the Northwest Pacific Tsunami Advisory Centre in Japan to focal points in every country.

The exercise will test enhanced forecasting products developed by PTWC and introduced in 2014. They provide detailed forecasts concerning the maximal Tsunami wave amplitude, their direction and power. They aim to allow each country to assess threats with greater precision and determine the appropriate level of alerts.

The PTWS was established in 1965 by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission following the deadly tsunami that hit the coasts of Chile and Japan in 1960. The purpose of the warning system is to facilitate the speedy dissemination of alerts across the region and to support countries' ability to respond to and mitigate tsunamis locally. Simulation exercises were carried out in 2006, 2008 and 2011.

Nearly 75% of deadly tsunami events occur in the Pacific Ocean and connected seas. Local tsunamis occur in the Pacific every two years on average. Major events affecting the whole Pacific Ocean occur several times every century. Over the past six years, four devastating tsunamis hit the region: 2009 in Samoa and Tonga, 2010 in Chile, 2011 in Japan, and 2013 in the Solomon Islands.

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