



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA to Participate in Pacific-Wide Tsunami Readiness Exercise

NOAA's two tsunami warning centers, located in Ewa Beach, Hawaii, and Palmer, Alaska, will help test the region's tsunami preparedness and response capabilities by participating in a Pacific-wide tsunami test Nov. 9-10, 2011. Along with the United States, 36 Pacific Rim countries will take part in "PacWave11," a mock tsunami exercise organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The exercise will take place as 21 APEC member nations of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation are meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, to discuss important Pacific issues, including mitigation for natural disasters such as tsunami.

About 75 percent of the world's earthquakes and tsunamis occur in the Pacific Ocean. On average, the Pacific has a tsunami every year, with a major Pacific-wide tsunami occurring a few times each century. Three destructive and deadly tsunamis have occurred in the Pacific in the last three years.

"The tsunamis that occurred in the Samoan Islands, Chile and Japan in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively, demonstrate that tsunamis can occur anywhere, at any time with great loss of life and tremendous devastation," said Laura Kong, director of NOAA's International Tsunami Information Center. "This important exercise will help countries improve their tsunami preparedness and response capabilities."

This is the third international tsunami warning exercise, the first two having occurred in 2006 and 2008. This year's exercise is divided into two parts. During part one a simulated tsunami will prompt NOAA's tsunami warning centers and the Japan tsunami warning center to send test notices to tsunami warning contacts in participating nations. During part two the tsunami warning contacts will receive the test notices and initiate simulating their national and local decision-making and alerting procedures. In some countries, this will be followed by coastal evacuations and other on-the-ground activities as part of an end-to-end tsunami warning and response practice. Countries engaged in the test will choose one of 10 possible tsunami scenarios that will best test their capabilities.

NOAA has operational responsibility for the U.S. Tsunami Warning System. The agency provides a 24-hour detection and warning system and increases public awareness about the threat of tsunamis. NOAA's two tsunami warning centers are responsible for issuing tsunami advisories, watches, warnings and information messages for tsunami threats. In addition, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center serves as the operational center for the Tsunami Warning System of the Pacific.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Working with partners, NOAA's National Weather Service is building a Weather-Ready Nation to support community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. Visit us online at weather.gov and on Facebook.

On the Web:

Exercise Pacific Wave 11 information site: <http://www.pacwave.info>

International Tsunami Information Center: <http://www.tsunamiwave.info>

Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System:

http://www.ioc-tsunami.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11&Itemid=12&lang=en

Pacific Tsunami Warning Center: <http://ptwc.weather.gov>

West Coast / Alaska Tsunami Warning Center: <http://wcatwc.arh.noaa.gov>