

Preparedness Safety Steps for a Tsunami

Americans living in coastal areas of the U.S. or traveling abroad to coastal areas would do well to become familiar with some basic safety and preparedness principles involving the hazards of huge waves such as was experienced this past weekend in Asia:

Background to Tsunami:

A tsunami (harbor wave, usually a series) usually results from an earthquake, landslide, exploding volcano or underwater disturbance traveling virtually unnoticed through open ocean. As it travels, the wave may be only 12 inches high, but once it reaches a shoreline it can reach a height of 100 feet or more.

A tsunami can move thousands of miles in a few hours, up to 600 miles an hour. Water from wave(s) can recede back into the sea as fast as it came on to shore.

If you observe the sea receding quickly or hear a "rushing train" noise coming from the sea, be alert and expect a sudden wave.

Coastal areas should have a shore siren for residents and businesses along the coast and nearby barrier islands.

Precautions:

1. Prepare an evacuation plan if you are on or near a coastal area
2. If alerted about impending danger, seek a protected spot; move inland preferably on foot to high ground (or reinforced concrete building) at least 100 feet above sea level. (do not climb trees)
3. Become part of a phone tree for an alert system or have a NOAA alert weather radio on at all times
4. Do not wait for an official warning if danger seems imminent - move quickly
5. Do not pack belongings and delay - Go now!
6. Do not return to beach areas until all clear is officially given
7. After all clear, beware of disease potential from contaminated water; drink only potable water
8. Sanitize everything after returning home
9. Have a disaster supplies ready-to-go kit for all members of family and pets
10. Never go to a shore to watch a tsunami; if you see it, you are too close to escape

For more information, consult *When Disaster Strikes Home! 101+ ways to protect your family from unthinkable emergencies*, published by EPEI Press, a subsidiary of Emergency Preparedness Educational Institute, Pp. 140-143; www.getprepared.org