
FACTSHEET

April 3, 2017

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
Emergency Management BC

Tsunami safety

The Province has a number of public education programs in place and supports communities across B.C. in tsunami preparedness initiatives, including a \$1.2-million, provincially-led earthquake and tsunami exercise held in June 2016, involving coastal communities on Vancouver Island. Any action that can be taken to help keep citizens safe and aware of potential hazards is important to B.C.'s overall public safety.

Facts:

- Tsunamis are a series of waves (not just one big one), most often generated by a major earthquake beneath the ocean floor. If you feel strong shaking, drop, cover and hold on. After the shaking has stopped, move to higher ground. Do not wait for an official warning.
- Tsunamis are sometimes preceded by a noticeable fall in the sea level as the ocean retreats seaward exposing the seafloor. A roar like an oncoming train may be heard as the tsunami's waves rush toward the shore.
- A tsunami carries a massive volume of water that can flood and inundate land. The time between waves can range from minutes to hours, and in height from a few centimetres to several metres.
- In the deep ocean, the waves travel about 800 kilometres per hour, but start to slow in shallower, coastal waters where their heights increase dramatically. A small tsunami at one point on the shore can be extremely large a few kilometres away.
- The level of tsunami threat to coastal communities varies by geography and location. Consult your local government on risk assessments and plans, including how they alert residents of potential tsunami threats and evacuation routes.
- Stay out of low-lying or potentially dangerous areas until an "all-clear" is issued by a recognized authority.
- Never go down to the shore to watch for a tsunami. When you can see the wave, you are too close to outrun it. Most tsunamis are like flash floods full of debris.
- All warnings to the public must be taken very seriously. A tsunami in 1960 killed 61 people in Hilo, Hawaii, because some thought it was a false alarm.

How To Know if a Tsunami is Coming?

- B.C. receives notification of a potential distant tsunami from the U.S. National Tsunami Warning Center. All information is then assessed by federal and provincial emergency officials and technical staff to determine if there is a threat to coastal B.C.
- If a tsunami threat is identified, Emergency Management BC (EMBC) will activate the Provincial Emergency Notification System (PENS), which notifies local communities and agencies with information on alert levels for the province's five tsunami zones.

- Official tsunami emergency warnings and information may be broadcast by radio, television, telephone, text message, door-to-door contact, social media, and/or outdoor sirens. Always follow instructions from local emergency officials.
- If you would like to receive tsunami information email notifications, you can sign up via the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission: <http://ow.ly/4ulR308aUCy>.
- The National Tsunami Warning Center (@NWS_NTWC), Natural Resources Canada (@CANADAquakes) and the U.S. Geographical Survey (@USGSted) are on Twitter.

Tsunami Preparedness

- If you live in or plan to visit coastal British Columbia, know your tsunami notification zone: <http://ow.ly/BojM30885JJ>.
- Develop a household plan, put together an emergency kit and connect with your neighbours: <http://ow.ly/YKLN30885Th>.

Contact:

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