



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY AND MINERAL INDUSTRIES

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November 1, 2016

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Many more tsunami zone signs coming to Highway 101

The new signs are part of ongoing efforts to help people find their way to high ground

Oregon's coast highway will soon have seven times as many distinctive blue and white tsunami signs.

The "Leaving Tsunami Hazard Zone," and "Entering Tsunami Hazard Zone," signs along Highway 101 are one of Oregon's most visible tsunami awareness efforts. But the original signs installed in the 1990s are now in the wrong place, because new coast-wide tsunami modeling better captures where tsunami waves could reach. More importantly, says Jonathan Allan, Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) coastal geomorphologist, original signs were installed in just a few locations.

"Signs were initially being installed community-by-community because at the time, funding for modeling tsunamis focused on individual communities," Allan says. "It would have taken 18 years to complete the entire coast. But with the 2013 completion of coast-wide tsunami modelling, we are now in a position to establish new signs all along Highway 101 and relocate existing signs to their correct location."

DOGAMI and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) are working on the sign expansion project, which will increase the number of signs from 36 to more than 260. ODOT has already installed new signs in the communities of Warrenton and Astoria, and with remaining signs for Clatsop and Tillamook County expected to be installed by spring 2017. Signs for the remainder of the coast highway system are expected to be installed by summer 2018. The project was funded by the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) with the cost to install the signs funded by ODOT.

The project is the latest in ongoing efforts by state agencies and coastal cities to help people find their way to high ground. The innovative Tsunami Blue Line project, also funded by the NTHMP, added a distinctive blue line and markers to identify evacuation routes in Florence, Reedsport, Coos Bay and Gold Beach.

“A tsunami will arrive within minutes, so knowing where high ground is and how to get there can save your life,” says Althea Rizzo, Geologic Hazards Coordinator for the Oregon Office of Emergency Management. “Practicing routes to safety is an essential part of preparedness.”

Signs and other wayfinding enhancements give evacuation routes greater visibility. The interactive evacuation map viewer at OregonTsunami.org lets coastal residents and visitors enter an address to see the nearest high ground, which they can then use to plan and practice their routes.

Additional Oregon tsunami preparedness and mitigation projects funded by NTHMP for 2016-18 include developing a web tool that lets people print a custom evacuation map, adding tsunami wayfinding signs in three more coastal communities, and support for community evacuation drills. Total funding received was \$445,603.

The first World Tsunami Awareness Day, being observed November 5, also encourages learning and practicing evacuation routes. The day, designated in December 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, is focused on the theme of “Effective Education and Evacuation Drills.”

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