

The City of Seaside's Tsunami Awareness Program

Outreach assessment: How to implement an effective tsunami preparedness outreach program

by Darci Connor
2005



Cover — The beach at Seaside. Photo by Jonathan C. Allan. The superimposed wave is modified from tsunami evacuation route signage adopted by the State of Oregon.

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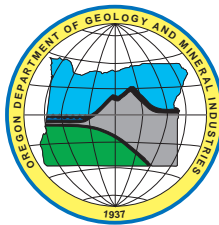
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**THE CITY OF SEASIDE'S TSUNAMI AWARENESS PROGRAM:
OUTREACH ASSESSMENT—
HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE
TSUNAMI PREPAREDNESS OUTREACH PROGRAM**

By

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2005

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The Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries is publishing this paper because the information furthers the mission of the Department. To facilitate timely distribution of the information, this report has not been edited to our usual standards.

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OVERVIEW

The City of Seaside partnered with the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) and Oregon Emergency Management (OEM) on a pilot Tsunami Awareness Program. The program was funded by the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) to determine the feasibility of educating the public on tsunami hazards and preparedness practices.

The City fostered the Tsunami Awareness Program, which began in September of 2004. A Tsunami Outreach Coordinator (TOC) was hired to manage the program and was chiefly responsible for developing and implementing the outreach strategies and evaluating the program's feasibility and success. The Awareness Program ran for nine months and, during that period, provided outreach to the community at different levels. Volunteer-driven outreach efforts were used to create an educational program that did not rely specifically on funding. Program volunteers were recruited throughout the community; significant support was provided by high school students, retired residents, and City representatives. Specifically, three main volunteers from the local high school had leadership roles in each outreach strategy and assisted the TOC for the duration of the program.

Outreach efforts targeted local residents, businesses, visitors, and children. Because a portion of the residential community is Hispanic, outreach efforts also provided information in Spanish to troubleshoot the language barrier and to ensure all local residents were informed about tsunami hazards. Five outreach strategies were implemented to reach target audiences. They included:

- Neighborhood Educator Project
- Business Workshop
- School Outreach Program
- Public Workshop
- Tsunami Evacuation Drill

An assessment tool was needed to evaluate the Tsunami Awareness Program. Surveys were used to gauge how outreach strategies influenced the public's comprehension of tsunami preparedness (Appendices A, B, C, and D). Additionally, at each

outreach event, participants filled out evaluation forms to encapsulate reactions.

This short-term (nine month) outreach program reached a significant portion of Seaside's population. Post-outreach surveys indicated that approximately 68% of the local households received information from a Neighborhood Educator and 2,200 people participated in the outreach events. The program advocated for ongoing learning, education on basic tsunami facts, and multi-scenario planning. From the program's findings, it is clear that outreach efforts should continue and should include a variety of outreach strategies that target businesses, students, and the general public. Each strategy serves a different role in education and is necessary for a comprehensive outreach program.

Collectively, the information from this pilot program provides a comprehensive overview of effective outreach strategies. These strategies will assist coastal communities in establishing a framework for their own outreach programs. This report describes Seaside's Tsunami Awareness Program, the program's findings, and the best approach to implement future outreach efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Seaside is considered Oregon's most vulnerable community to a tsunami disaster due to its summer crowds and low-lying geography. It has a residential population of 6,000; however, during the summer months, the population can increase to 40,000 from the influx of tourists. Most of Seaside is located in the tsunami inundation zone. Two river systems run through the city parallel to the ocean, forming barriers to high ground (See Figure 1). The majority of Seaside's population is located on the west side of the Necanicum River. This presents a critical evacuation problem, because in a local tsunami event people would have to cross one or more bridges and travel up to a mile within 30 minutes to get beyond the inundation zone.

The Seaside community must be educated and trained on tsunami emergency procedures. People will need to respond quickly in order to reach high ground before the tsunami hits the coast. Public education will minimize the loss of life.