

LA COUNTY FIRE – TSUNAMI AFTER ACTION REPORT

March 11, 2011 Tsunami

- March 10, 2011, 9:46 p.m., 9.0 earthquake off Honshu Japan – pager notification to Chief Officers
- Midnight - Chief Officer pager notification of Tsunami Warning north of Point Conception and a Tsunami Advisory south of Point Conception.
- Department Operation Center (DOC) activated at Command & Control facility
- Chief Deputy Tripp, Duty Deputy Chief Metro, Chief Lifeguard Frazer, Section Chief Gallagher, Battalion Chief Bundesen, Battalion Chief Collins, and Battalion Chief Jon O'Brien (PIO) to DOC. Jeff Terry from OEM to DOC.
- 3:00 a.m. - Conference call to coastal fire and law agencies to coordinate response, press release, and jurisdictional action to be taken.
- Tsunami surge ETA to LA – 8:32 a.m.; surges to continue for up to 10-12 hours
- Projected surge amplitude – 3 feet
- Low tide – 8:07 at 1.04 feet; High tide at 3:38 at 2.33 feet
- Surf size – 1-2 foot
- Coastal erosion – minimal
- Beach activity – minimal
- DOC decision made to keep beaches open but to warn and advise patrons to stay off rock jetties, out of the water, and voluntarily off the beach.
 - No coastline evacuation necessary
- Press release drafted and approved. Distributed to all coastal agencies as template.
- Talking points created for field personnel
- 10 Standard Tsunami Life Saving Orders drafted and approved
- 6:00 a.m. – Conference call with coastal Chiefs to discuss and refine plan

Agency Actions

- Press release issued with safety advisory notifications
- Rescue Boat crews recalled to assist moving fleet offshore during the tidal surges – boats moved offshore at 0730.
- Land units called to report at 0700 to begin patrols to warn and advise beach patrons
 - Heightened awareness
 - Stay off rock jetties, out of the water, and voluntarily off the beach
 - Maintain LCES (lookout, communication, escape routes, safe zones)
- Live aboards to be warned in Redondo King Harbor – voluntary evacuation
- MDR advisement to secure vessels (double-tie)
- Hermosa, Manhattan, and Venice piers to be closed; Santa Monica will only close lower pier
- Cabrillo and White Point parking lots closed
- Venice parking lots closed
- Santa Monica parking lots closed – reopened at noon
- MDR launch ramp closed – reopened at 2:00 p.m. (rescue at 3:00 p.m.)
- Coast Guard instruct cargo and tanker ships to not fuel, load or unload during tidal surge period

Reports

- 0920 – first surge witnessed in SM
- 5-12 knot surges witnessed in Redondo Harbor
- 15-18 minute intervals between surges
- Outside buoy broke free in MDR
- Minor dock damage reported at MDR
- 4 docks damaged in Redondo King Harbor
- 1 dock destroyed in Redondo King Harbor
- 8 vessels rescued with 3 capsized on back side of Catalina in Cat Harbor
- 4 vessels rescued in Redondo King Harbor and 2 minor assists
- 6 vessels rescued in MDR and 6 minor assists
- 1730 – boaters being escorted back into Redondo King Harbor one at a time

What Worked Well

- Prompt Chief Officer pager notification of earthquake and Tsunami Advisory
- DOC activation at FCCF – Executive Office and Subject Matter Experts collaborate
- DOC Conference calls - coordinated effort between coastal agencies
- Early communication with Coast Guard and other agencies
- Prompt press release with clear advisory warnings
- Coordinated mobilization of resources with unified message
- Section Chiefs and Battalion Chiefs controlling their jurisdictions, working with other agencies, and presence at other agency ICP's
- Field status updates
- Informed decision, based on ALL conditions, to keep beaches open with warning advisements as to not panic the public unnecessarily
- Emergency responses to 18 boat distresses
- Efficient use of resources - limited overtime

Needed Improvements

- Central Region Deputy Chief immediate notification in call-out matrix
- Better public education about tsunamis – significant LA earthquake 6.5 or greater = go immediately to high ground
- Coordinated public warning system - Airborne PA, land based PA, reverse 911, and Emergency Alert System.
- Expanded program of evacuation route and safe zone signs
- Update department policy and plan based on lessons learned from this incident
- Finalize IAP template for tsunami incidents