

Tsunami Sirens Going Away

Changes are occurring along the coast to the tsunami warning system (sirens). The whole process started when the Federal Communications Commission required various government entities to go from wide band communications to narrow band.

Each county and local jurisdiction has until January 1, 2013 to get into compliance.

The siren systems along the coast are triggered by radio communications (wide band) and so the receivers in the siren systems had to be changed along with everything else.

The sirens in the Tillamook area, for at least a significant part, came from the Trojan nuclear reactor system when it was shut down, which makes the sirens fairly old, and some of them have been failing. The cost to upgrade the sirens with “newer” receivers was about \$3500; and this cost did not include normal maintenance and testing. Many jurisdictions (cities, privately owned sirens, counties) were looking for either someone else to take over the sirens, or some means of funding the replacement and upkeep. Estimates of replacing the older sirens entirely ran about \$15,000 (the “newer” sirens were not brand new – just not as old as the current set).

Problems, in addition to some current sirens failing, included the fact that some local jurisdictions would use the sirens for more than just tsunami warnings, adding to the confusion to those hearing one go off.

A meeting was held in Tillamook county including the majority of owners, mayors, fire chiefs (the one on our property is owned by Netarts/Oceanside Fire District) and local concerned citizens, and at the meeting the decision was unanimous to discontinue the sirens.

So the issue is: What now? How will we be warned of a tsunami?

It is easiest to divide the issue into local and distant tsunamis.

With a local tsunami, one will not need a siren. There won't be any question as to what is happening – there will be an earthquake so intense that you will be lucky to remain on your feet. It will most likely last for three to five minutes of violent shaking; the tsunami will be arriving 8 to 15 minutes after the shaking subsides. In fact, the quake will be most likely the cause of damage at The Capes and not the following waves of water. If the Earth starts shaking that violently, as soon as you are able, get to higher ground. How high? As high as you can. Although we are predicted to get a series of waves no higher than 35 to 50 feet, you don't want to be close. Because of the funneling effect in the northern part of Japan, the tsunami there got up to about the 100 foot (above sea) level – which is not to say that would occur here; but a tsunami wave is not something to be trifled with.

Distant tsunamis will have a much longer time before impact. The one caused in Alaska in 1964 took about 4 hours to arrive here; the recent one in Japan took about 9 hours. There are a number of ways you can be alerted to a distant tsunami.

Cell phones can be registered for a reverse 911 through their website:

[http://entry.inspirionlogistics.com/tillamook 911/wens.cfm](http://entry.inspirionlogistics.com/tillamook%20911/wens.cfm)

If you have no internet, no landline (if you had one you would get the 911 reverse call), cell phone doesn't work, and no sirens then what?

The first suggestion is that you purchase a NOAA All-Hazard or Weather radio. Fred Meyer, Radio Shack (both with locations in Tillamook), and Amazon are all places to purchase.

In addition, Tillamook County has two 600 watt speaker systems that have been installed in Civil Air Patrol aircraft; they were demonstrated during the tsunami drills and are remarkably effective as they can be heard up to two miles away. While the planes can fly in all but the worst of weather, there are similar systems which are vehicle mounted.

Other areas of the coast will have NOAA radio information and reverse 911. They may or may not have the sirens (for example, Lincoln County is expanding their siren coverage). The siren at the end of Promontory will eventually be removed (it is the property of the Fire District).

For more information, feel free to speak with the Emergency Committee members – Anne Bethell or Wanda Partin – or your manager.