



TSUNAMI INFO

San Juan County Sheriff's Office
Department of Emergency Management

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: We've heard so much about the tsunami in Asia. Could a similar event happen here?

A: The short answer is yes. The greatest exposure is along the outer coast, but a tsunami could affect Puget Sound and the San Juans.

Q: How big will the tsunami be?

A: Predicting tsunamis is difficult. Current models indicate that after a large subduction zone quake off of the NW coast, a tsunami may reach the San Juans in 1-2 hours. The average height of the surge may be ten feet above normal, but that height could double at the end of narrow bays, or near constrictions of flow. The geography of the islands is complex and hard to model, but the important thing to remember is that high ground is never far in the San Juans, and calmly heading there after a quake always makes sense.

Q: Is there a warning system in place?

A: Yes, both a natural one and a manmade version. The natural one is the most reliable and important to understand:

- If you feel a large quake, leave low lying coastal areas.
- If there is a sudden drop in sea level, head for high ground.
- If a tsunami does strike, remember, the first wave will be followed by others. Don't return to the shore!

The manmade notification system is the national Emergency Alert System (EAS) that is tied into the West Coast Tsunami Warning Center. The simplest and most reliable way to receive EAS alerts is to purchase a "SAME" equipped weather radio. This allows the reception of emergency alerts specifically targeted to San Juan County. See www.sanjuandem.net/Hazards/EAS.htm for more info.

Q: Where can I learn more:

A: The following web sites are great starting points:
The USGS: www.earthquake.usgs.gov/bytopic/tsunami.html
The West Coast Tsunami Warning Center: www.wcatwc.gov

**For more info on emergency preparedness,
visit the emergency management website
at www.sanjuandem.net**

Beginning in 2005, San Juan County Emergency Management will begin posting these signs in high risk areas in order to remind islanders that *all* low lying coastal areas are potentially at risk after a large earthquake.

