

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 15, 2018
To: Harbor Commission
From: Scott Riedman, Waterfront Director
Subject: **Harbor Operations Report**

JANUARY 23RD TSUNAMI ALERT

At 1:31 am PST on January 23rd, a magnitude 7.9 earthquake, with an epicenter 350 miles southwest of Anchorage, Alaska, rocked Alaskans and generated an initial tsunami warning, which quickly turned to a tsunami watch for the Pacific coast, then ultimately canceled three hours later. Initially, it appeared that a tsunami tidal surge could hit Santa Barbara as soon as 5:00 a.m.

Acting on the warning and then the watch, Waterfront staff implemented Stage One of its Tsunami Emergency Response Plan, including notifications to the City's Combined Communications Center (or "Dispatch"—responders to 9-1-1 calls), the City's Emergency Services Manager, and Waterfront Director. Harbor Patrol also took initial safety precautions, like securing Sea Landing's bait barge to the north side of the City Pier and doubling lines on a dredge tender secured to a dredge southeast of Marina One.

Because the tsunami watch was ultimately cancelled (and not elevated to an advisory or watch), staff stopped short of Stage Two of its emergency response, which would have included public notifications, through Reverse 9-1-1 and/or Blackboard Connect, a web-based system the Waterfront Department uses for rapid messaging. If a significant tsunami had been imminent, the message would have included the following advice:

1. People in the City's established tsunami zone (coastal signs indicates these zones, as well as exit routes from areas of potential inundation), should move to high ground, at least 100 feet above sea level.
2. People in the immediate area of the coast, especially, say, on the beach, should move to high ground at City College, then, depending on timing and magnitude of the tsunami, make plans for staying on high ground. Moving up the college's stadium steps is a good way to initially move to safety. Do not stay to "watch" the tsunami—a potentially deadly mistake.
3. If you own a boat in the harbor, leave it where it is, unless you choose to take it to sea ahead of the first tidal surge. If you decide to take your boat to sea, travel two to three miles offshore and be prepared to stay at sea for at least two days, as the first tsunami surge is often not the largest one, plus a tsunami acts like bathtub water. It will slosh back and forth, even between continents, for hours, even days. Make sure you take enough provisions with you, as returning to the harbor in the

middle of a series of tsunami “pulses” can be more dangerous than if you had never left the harbor in the first place.

4. Depending on timing and anticipated magnitude of the tsunami tidal surge, liveaboards should either get off their boats and move to high ground, shelter in place, or take their boats two to three miles to sea, in accordance with #3 above.

On January 23rd, our community was spared yet another environmental catastrophe, but a tiny tidal change recorded by a NOAA gauge at the east of the City Pier was enough to remind us that preparedness is the key to surviving a major tsunami.

Prepared by: Mick Kronman, Harbor Operations Manager