



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

2000 MAIN STREET

FIRE DEPARTMENT

CALIFORNIA 92648

May 20, 2007

Ann Avery Andres, Foreman
2007-2008 Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Foreman Andres:

On behalf of the Mayor and City Council, I am writing to respond to your recommendations regarding the city's tsunami preparedness plans. Thank you for making tsunami preparedness one of your priorities as we have done. The City of Huntington Beach was impressed with your comprehensive report and agrees that this is an important issue.

F-1 The Sheriff Department's existing tsunami inundation maps are inconsistent with those used by the two largest coastal cities, appear to minimize the threat and could contribute to misinformed decision-making during a crisis.

Response: Huntington Beach plans to retain a consultant and if necessary, revise our tsunami inundation maps during the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Following completion of the maps, they will be provided to the Sheriff's Department for inclusion in the county plan.

F-2 Existing tsunami signs along roadways are small, difficult to read and, in at least one city, not visible to visitors driving into the tsunami hazard zone.

Response: The tsunami warning signs that Huntington Beach has in place were approved by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) during the city's tsunami readiness national certification process. The city has nearly twice as many signs posted as any other coastal city in Orange County, and currently there are no plans to increase the size or number of signs we have in place. Additionally, tsunami warning signs have been placed at the entrances to tsunami hazard zones.

F-3 Sirens at the beach without public address capability are ineffective unless beachgoers know what the sirens mean and how to respond to the warning.

Response: Currently the city has emergency warning sirens located at seven of the eight fire stations. These sirens do not have public address capabilities; however, the city's Marine Safety Division has a public address system located on the pier which covers the coastline from approximately Beach Boulevard to the south and 11th Street to the north.

Additionally, there are public address systems housed in every Huntington Beach lifeguard truck, police car, police helicopter, and fire apparatus. These public address systems have been used and will continue to be used in conjunction with the sirens to evacuate the beach in the event of a tsunami warning or actual event. The Marine Safety Division is attempting to secure grant funding to expand the fixed public address system at the beach.

- F-4. Public education directed at beach visitors is inadequate, making them the least prepared and highest at-risk population in the event of a tsunami.

Response: See F-3 above.

The Huntington Beach Fire Department Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers set up booths on the opening to the pier and hand out emergency preparedness and tsunami information on a regular basis. Each year they distribute thousands of tsunami pamphlets to residents and visitors to the city through the booths and the CERT public education program.

Additionally, tsunami emergency information brochures are provided to the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau, Marine Safety Department, and coastal hotels/motels. These brochures provide information about tsunamis and what to do if the emergency warning sirens are sounded. All of the city's lifeguard towers have tsunami hazard zone signs permanently mounted on them instructing people to move inland in the event of an earthquake. We will re-evaluate those signs in the 2008-2009 fiscal year to include specific language regarding actions to take if the sirens are activated.

We have met with representatives from the County's Emergency Management Bureau as well as the other coastal cities referenced in your report, and they are aware of our responses to your recommendations. Should you need additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me at 714-536-5402.

Sincerely,



Duane S. Olson
Fire Chief

DSO/GM/lne

- C: Paul Emery – City Administrator
Debbie Cook – Mayor
City Council Members
Jennifer McGrath – City Attorney
Eric Engberg – Division Chief / Operations
Mark Daggett – EOC Manager