



NEWPORT BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 1768, 3300 Newport Blvd., Newport Beach, CA 92658-8915

STEVE LEWIS, FIRE CHIEF

June 9, 2008

Ms. Nancy Wieben Stock
Presiding Judge of Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Wieben Stock:

On behalf of the Mayor and City Manager, I am writing to respond to your recommendations regarding the Orange County Grand Jury report titled, "PARADISE LOST: If a Tsunami Strikes the Orange County Rivera...". We are pleased that the Grand Jury has taken an interest in this important disaster threat to Orange County. In the past three years, our Fire Department Emergency Management Division has placed tsunami planning as a high priority. As mentioned in the comprehensive report, we have accomplished many goals in preparing for and responding to a tsunami disaster, but there is always room for improvement. As requested, we have prepared the following response to your report findings:

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: The City Newport Beach plans to work with the Sheriff Department's Emergency Management Bureau, as well as all coastal cities, to standardize tsunami inundation maps for the entire county coastline. We plan on having a standardized county map by the end of 2009.

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

Response: Initially, the City of Newport Beach placed the 12-inch small signs on all evacuation routes. After further review, we realize that the 12-inch signs may be difficult for motorists to read. To reduce the costs of sign purchase and replacement, as the small 12-inch signs are damaged or stolen and as current sign stocks are depleted, these signs will be replaced with 18-inch medium signage.

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.

Ms. Nancy Wieben Stock
June 9, 2008
Page 2

Response: Currently, the City of Newport Beach does *not* have emergency warning sirens on the beach. The City is researching possibly purchasing warning sirens for the tsunami inundation area. While the City agrees that warning sirens are a valuable resource to warn the public of emergencies, they can be very expensive. The City has allocated limited funds to purchase a warning siren system, but may not be able to purchase the upgraded system with voice capabilities, due to the expense. The issue of whether the City should purchase tsunami warning sirens for our beach areas will be placed before our City Council this summer.

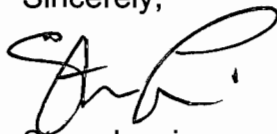
Additionally, there are public address systems with voice capabilities that are located on all the City's fire, police, and lifeguard vehicles. These public address systems provide an effective means of notifying the public during an emergency.

- 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: The City of Newport Beach has numerous tsunami hazard zone signs at various beach locations to notify visitors that they are in a tsunami hazard zone, and that during a tsunami they should seek higher ground. Tsunami emergency information is also available at our Lifeguard Headquarters located at the Newport Pier and all City facilities. Additionally, the City plans to work with the Sheriff Department's Emergency Management Bureau and all coastal cities in Orange County to develop standardized tsunami public education materials that can be used county-wide. These materials will be distributed to various City locations that reach beach visitors, including: beach kiosks, lifeguard towers, hotel lobbies, rental property agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, and other locations as necessary.

Again, we thank the Grand Jury for their hard work and dedication, and appreciate their well-researched and helpful recommendations for improving disaster planning in Orange County. If you need additional information or would to discuss this further, please contact me at 949-644-3101.

Sincerely,



Steve Lewis
Fire Chief

Cc: Homer Bludau
City Council Members