

City of Seal Beach



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May 12, 2008

Nancy Wieben-Stock, Presiding Judge
Orange County Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Re.: Mayor's Response to Grand Jury Report: "PARADISE LOST: If a Tsunami Strikes the Orange County Riviera..."

Dear Judge Wieben-Stock:

My office, that of the City of Seal Beach Mayor, received the Orange County Grand Jury report, "PARADISE LOST: If a Tsunami Strikes the Orange County Riviera..." The Seal Beach Police Department serves as the primary agency for the City of Seal Beach (City), charged with disaster preparedness preparations. Based upon the requests detailed in the report, I have compiled responses pursuant to California Penal Code Sections §933 and §933.05 to Findings-F-1; F-2, and F-4 as well as Recommendations R-1, R2-a, R-2b, and R-4.

RESPONSE TO FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS:

Finding-1. *"The Sheriff's 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."*

Recommendation-1. *"The Sheriff's Department's Emergency management Bureau: Develop a plan in coordination with beach cities to standardize tsunami maps for the entire Orange County coast."*

I **agree** with the Grand Jury's finding and support the development of a standardized tsunami inundation map for the entire Orange County coast. This recommendation's implementation will occur as coordinated by and in conjunction with the agency charged with implementation, the Orange County Sheriff's Department's Emergency Management Bureau (OCSD's EMB). The Seal Beach Police Department, acting as this City's responsible agency for disaster preparedness, is committed to supporting the OCSD's EMB in any way possible within the limits of our resources.

Finding-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."*

Recommendation-2a. *"All beach cities and the County on behalf of Sunset Beach: Replace all small and medium sized tsunami signs with the largest tsunami signs authorized by Caltrans."*

Recommendation-2b. *"All beach cities and the County on behalf of Sunset Beach: Post the largest tsunami hazard zone signs visible to inbound traffic on major roads and on Pacific Coast Highway if tsunami hazard signs are not already posted there."*

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I **partially disagree** with the Grand Jury's finding. The City, in the wake of the June 14, 2005 tsunami warning, entered into a series of implementations to better prepare its publics to respond to tsunami and other threats. Included in those implementations was an effort to comply with and meet the standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) and National Weather Service's (NWS) StormReady and TsunamiReady public awareness programs. An element of these programs included signage posted to beach community entrances and within beach communities directing beach visitors and residents away from the threat. The City followed the FEMA and NWS program guidelines (no other guidelines existed at the time), and budgeted for, acquired, and installed "approved" signage, consistent with equivalent signage in other Orange County beach communities at the time. Both FEMA/NWS and CalTrans approved the signage. The NWS awarded the City full certification for complete compliance with all guidelines required for completion of their TsunamiReady program at the March 10, 2008 City Council Meeting.

With the exception of Sunset Beach (OC unincorporated area), the City has the shortest beach in the entire county (2.0 miles according to the Grand Jury's report). Nonetheless, the City posted 66 warning or directional signs in its beach area and on roadways leading down to and through the beach neighborhoods and Pacific Coast Highway. Evaluated another way, this means Seal Beach posted 33 signs per mile of beach – 66% more signage than any other beach community in the county!

According to the Grand Jury's report, the signs we posted are the smallest of the three sizes available. The City purchased and installed approved signage in compliance with known, contemporary, requirements. It will not replace those signs with larger signs until the existing signs become damaged or stolen. At that time, replacement signage may include the largest signage dependent on available resources.

Finding-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."*

Recommendation-4: *"All beach cities and the Sheriff's Department's Emergency Management Bureau: Develop methods to communicate tsunami public education messages to beach visitors."*

I **agree** with the finding. We will develop and execute continuous educational messaging to beach visitors, potentially including educational signage in beach parking lots, website informational postings, SB Visitor Bureau pamphleting, etc.

As mentioned above, after the 2005 tsunami warning, the City took an aggressive approach to disaster preparedness and over the last three years has demonstrated its commitment by way of the following examples. However, the City's efforts will not stop with the items bulleted below:

- Added website links on the City's website (www.seal-beach.ca.us) to professionally recognized educational and informational disaster preparedness sites, including those addressing tsunamis.
- Added in-house preparedness pages to the City's website, addressing a multitude of hazards, in addition to and including tsunamis.
- Used the City's cable-television bulletin board to post educational information to the local cable community.
- Hired a state recognized, professional disaster preparedness consultant to overhaul and update its existing Emergency Operations Plan. The Plan is now updated every two years.
- Developed a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) of community volunteers currently numbering approximately 50 people. These volunteers were trained to FEMA and USFirstGov standards including those of the Incident Command System (ICS), Standardized Emergency


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Management System (SEMS), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), light search and rescue, first-aid, and cardio-pulmonary rescue (CPR).

- Then embracing the concept that disasters, like crime, fail to recognize community borders, we enlisted the west-county-border cities of Los Alamitos, Cypress, La Palma, Buena Park, and Westminster to develop similar CERT programs. Once done, we rolled all six cities' CERT volunteers under the common organizational umbrella of the West Orange County CERT – the first of its kind regionally and nationally. This cooperative West OC CERT now has approximately 250 volunteers for use in any community needing trained and indemnified disaster worker personnel.
- We expanded our previous Senior Volunteer Program and renamed it to comply with the federal Volunteers in Policing program, lowering the entrance age and generating further indemnification for the involved personnel and the City. These 65 volunteers are cross-trained in CERT techniques and available in addition to our CERT volunteers.
- We used Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FEMA grant monies to acquire a fully-equipped 4x4 crew-cab, heavy duty pick-up truck, and a 22' box trailer to haul disaster equipment to locations in need.
 - The equipment includes hand tools, personal safety equipment, lighting, generators, etc.
- We used DHS Urban Area Security Initiative grant monies, pooled with the Cities of Los Alamitos and Cypress to design and purchase a state-of-the-art, 40' long mobile command post for use in a variety of incidents, including natural and man-made disasters.
- Using California Law Enforcement Equipment Program (CLEEP) grant monies, we upgraded the City's Emergency Operations Center located in the police headquarters building.
- Upgraded previously purchased and deployed a mass-call communication system (Reverse9-1-1) to communicate with our publics. (We used this system to warn our publics in the potential known inundation zones on June 14, 2008, and continue to use it for law enforcement and emergency incidents.)
- Lastly, the City approved and budgeted for an additional person to its overall employee roster. It hired a trained, certified, and experienced Emergency Services Manager. His role is to design and coordinate all current and future, disaster preparedness programs within our community.

I appreciate the time spent by the 2007-2008 Orange County Grand Jury examining Orange County's tsunami readiness and look forward to an enhanced, united, and collaborative disaster preparedness system for our citizens and community.

Sincerely,



CHARLES J. ANTOS, MAYOR
CITY OF SEAL BEACH