



Ministry of Civil Defence  
& Emergency Management  
Te Rākau Whakamarumaru

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Tsunami can arrive in minutes – have a plan to evacuate**

The tragic earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia is a reminder for New Zealanders of the importance of knowing how to stay safe in the event of a tsunami.

Sarah Stuart-Black, Director for the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management, says tsunami can arrive in minutes and it is important that people know the right actions to take and how to evacuate.

“The Indonesian tsunami is a tragic reminder of how swift and destructive tsunami can be. Tsunami safety is a shared responsibility that we need to own as individuals, families, workplaces and communities. We all need to know what to do before it happens.

“Check out the tsunami evacuation zones for your area and make sure you know where to go, whether you are at home, at work or out and about. Plan and practise your evacuation route on foot or bike.”

Mrs Stuart-Black says New Zealand has extensive arrangements for monitoring, detecting and issuing warnings about tsunami – but just as important is the public knowing what to do.

Local source tsunami – that is, generated close to the New Zealand coast – are different to regional or distant tsunami, which originate further away from New Zealand and allow more time for thorough scientific assessments and evacuations. In a local source tsunami, it is unlikely there will be time for an official warning before the first waves hit.

“Local source tsunami may arrive in just minutes. If you feel a long or strong earthquake, don’t wait for an official warning – if it’s long or strong, get gone.”

Mrs Stuart-Black says that in a local source tsunami situation, it is unlikely there will be enough time for Civil Defence or emergency services to safely deploy personnel to coordinate mass evacuations of communities.

“The reality is that you need to be prepared to self-evacuate without assistance from emergency services.”

Mrs Stuart-Black says next week’s national ShakeOut earthquake drill and tsunami hīkoi is a timely opportunity for people to practice tsunami evacuation. There is still time to register at [www.shakeout.govt.nz](http://www.shakeout.govt.nz). Already more than 770,000 people have signed up to take part, and you can sign up in just two minutes.

While it's being held during the school and work day, Mrs Stuart Black says families should also take time to familiarise themselves with the evacuation routes from their home if it's in a coastal area, and any other coastal places where they spend a lot of time, such as the homes of friends and family or holiday spots.

While the *Long or Strong, Get Gone* advice is vital for felt earthquakes, not all tsunami will be preceded by a felt earthquake – including some that originate close to New Zealand. For example, tsunami can be caused by volcanic eruptions or landslides, and recent research from GNS Science has shown that earthquakes generated in the Kermadec Trench may not be felt strongly, and could generate a tsunami that may arrive in as little as an hour. This means the public may be asked to evacuate due to an imminent tsunami risk from an earthquake that may not have been widely felt.

In such scenarios, warnings will be issued as soon as a tsunami threat is identified to ensure that the public have earliest possible notice to self-evacuate.

“This is why it's so important to make sure you know the different ways to stay informed during an emergency. Learn which radio stations to listen to, which websites and social media to follow, and check if you can receive Emergency Mobile Alerts.”

### **Local source earthquakes – what you need to know:**

- **Long or Strong, Get Gone**

If you're near the coast and experience any of the following:

- Feel a strong earthquake that makes it hard to stand up, or a weak rolling earthquake that lasts a minute or more
- See a sudden rise or fall in sea level
- Hear loud and unusual noises from the sea

Don't wait for an official warning; move immediately to the nearest high ground, out of all tsunami evacuation zones, or as far inland as possible.

- **You'll need to self-evacuate**

In a local source tsunami, there won't be time for emergency services to go door to door to coordinate evacuations. You must be prepared to self-evacuate.

- **Know your route**

Check out your local Civil Defence Emergency Management Group's website for your local tsunami evacuation zone maps. Links to all CDEM Groups can be found [here](#). Practise your route – our New Zealand [Shakeout](#) earthquake drill and tsunami hīkoi is a great opportunity to do this.

- **Staying safe means staying informed**

It is unlikely there will be an official warning before the first waves hit, they will be issued as swiftly as possible. Know where to get information. Listen to the radio for updates. Warnings and evacuation maps will be issued via Emergency Mobile Alerts, the Civil Defence website, news media, @NZCivilDefence Twitter and NZCivilDefence Facebook.

- **Plan ahead if self-evacuation is a problem**

If you have a disability or special requirements, make arrangements with your support network to alert you of any warnings and to help you evacuate.

- **Hīkoi not convoy**

If possible, run, walk or cycle when evacuating from a tsunami. You don't want to get stuck in traffic in a tsunami zone.

- **Have a grab bag ready**

Have a grab bag ready with food, water, warm clothes, a battery powered radio, and anything else you might need

- **Don't forget Fluffy**

If you have pets, domestic animals or livestock, include them in your evacuation planning.

**Note to editors:**

The below *Tsunami Warnings: A Guide for Media* has been developed specifically for media to explain how tsunami warnings work. To request hard copies please reply to this email.

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/media/Guides-for-media/Tsunami-Warnings-A-Guide-for-Media-v1.0-2018-07-27-FINAL-WEB.pdf>

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