

Media release



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Northland tsunami siren network testing late September

Tsunami sirens from Te Hapua to Mangawhai will be tested when daylight saving starts later this month (**subs: September**).

The 150-plus Northland sirens will sound on the morning of Sunday 25 September as part of regular twice-yearly checks to ensure they're all working correctly.

Victoria Randall, spokesperson for the Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group, says sirens around the region will sound twice – firstly at 9.20am for 10 minutes and again at 10am for just 30 seconds.

“Civil Defence community groups or local council staff will monitor the sirens at these times, reporting any faults for repair.”

Ms Randall says the siren network – 85 in the Whangarei district, 58 in the Far North and 14 in the Kaipara district – has been set up to alert coastal communities in the event of a tsunami warning.

The shoebox-sized units, each with its own siren, flashing light and distinctive blue and yellow Civil Defence logo, are attached to Northpower or Top Energy power poles in communities along the coast.

Ms Randall says the flashing lights are blue on all but one of the 157 sirens; the sole exception is Tutukaka Harbour's marina tsunami siren, which has a yellow light designed to be more visible to boats using that area. (Tsunami events in recent years have noticeably impacted on Tutukaka Harbour's tides and currents.)

“To find out more about the North's tsunami siren network warning system – including audio of what the sirens sound like – visit www.nrc.govt.nz/tsunamisirens or Far North, Kaipara or Whangarei District Council websites.”

Ms Randall says in the event of a real tsunami warning, the sirens are an indicator to local communities to seek further information.

“Rather than triggering evacuations, tsunami sirens are designed to alert people that they need to seek further information about potential tsunami risks from official sources.”

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Northland's tsunami siren network provides a valuable warning system for coastal communities where the tsunami is generated by distant seismic events allowing adequate official notification time, Ms Randall says.

However, tsunami generated by earthquakes close to New Zealand might not leave enough time for the siren warning network to be activated.

“Recognising natural warnings from the surrounding environment is important in these situations.”

Ms Randall says natural warnings Northland coastal communities should always look out for include;

- Earthquakes, either strong with shaking ground or weak and rolling lasting a least a minute
- Unusual sea behaviour including a sudden sea level fall or rise
- Loud and unusual sea noises, particularly roaring like a jet engine.

“These may be the only warning signs from a nearby-generated tsunami as it may arrive as quickly as 70 minutes after a major earthquake and there may not be time for an official Civil Defence notification.”

Ms Randall says coastal households in areas at risk from tsunami should plan prior so they are prepared, should a tsunami of this type hit.

“People should immediately go to higher ground. Everybody in the community should know where they're going to head beforehand. There won't be an opportunity to sort things out at the time,” Ms Randall says.

Meanwhile, she says information about Civil Defence generally is available from www.nrc.govt.nz/civildefence or from the Civil Defence Facebook page www.facebook.com/civildefencenorthland

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