

Hon Nikki Kaye

Minister of Civil Defence



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Media Statement

National tsunami exercise starts this week

Over 100 organisations and several hundred staff nationwide are getting ready to take part in Exercise Tangaroa, which will test New Zealand's arrangements for preparing for, responding to and recovering from a major tsunami, says Civil Defence Minister Nikki Kaye.

The exercise will take place on three separate days in August and September.

"While there will be some public involvement, this exercise will mainly involve the agencies who would be part of a tsunami response, unlike our national earthquake drill, ShakeOut, which has a broader public participation," says Ms Kaye.

"A major tsunami would require a simultaneous national, regional and local response, so those involved will include central, regional and local government staff, as well as emergency services, lifeline utilities such as power and telecommunications companies and even Embassies and High Commissions.

"Exercise Tangaroa is an opportunity for all of these organisations to test their processes, decision-making and communications."

Ms Kaye says the exercise will be based on the simulated scenario of a regional source tsunami, generated by an earthquake in the Kermadec trench region and taking less than three hours to reach New Zealand.

"The exercise kicks off on 31 August, when it will focus on preparations during the period between when an alert is received and the first waves hit.

"On 14 September the focus will shift to the response after the tsunami has hit, then on 28 September, management of the longer-term recovery will be tested.

"Day one of the exercise will see the National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) in the basement of the Beehive activated, with staff from relevant agencies called in to support key functions such as operations, logistics and

public information, just as they would during a real emergency.

“The activities in the NCMC will include working through the process for requesting and accepting offers of international assistance, and representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the United States and Emergency Management Australia (EMA) will be in Wellington to participate in the exercise.

“I will work through some of the processes involved in potentially declaring a state of national emergency, and other Ministers will be involved in this.

“Across the rest of the country, Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Groups will activate Emergency Coordination Centres and relevant response plans.

“While activities in each region will vary depending on unique local circumstances, generally speaking day one is about those involved in a major tsunami running through their roles and testing their processes and decision making.

“This is about simulating a scenario where there’s a high volume of inter-agency communications and testing key aspects of the response, including the deployment of resources, planning evacuations and arranging welfare assistance.

“Days two and three of the exercise will involve workshops held across the country at local, regional and national level.

“While the focus of this exercise is the agencies involved in a tsunami response, there will be additional resources developed to increase public awareness of tsunami over the coming year.

“Exercise Tangaroa has an important role to play in helping us identify any gaps in tsunami warning, response and recovery in New Zealand. The exercise will also inform the shape of future CDEM and Government work programmes.

“I expect to receive a report in the months after the exercise is completed, which will detail any potential lessons identified.

“It’s crucial that we’re adequately prepared for tsunami, which pose a significant risk to New Zealand.

“In an event such as a major tsunami, a massive response and recovery effort will be needed. Exercise Tangaroa will test how New Zealand will deal with this kind of scenario.

“The risk of tsunami is real and we must be prepared.”

Ms Kaye says Exercise Tangaroa is one of many recent Government

initiatives to build New Zealand's capacity and strengthen arrangements to support communities during times of emergency, including:

- a new \$2.5 million public education programme to make preparedness real, relevant and easy for New Zealanders – see [Never Happens? Happens](#)
- nearly \$1 million in funding grants for regionally-led projects to improve resilience throughout New Zealand
- a \$6.2 million funding increase for the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM), to bolster its ability to ensure New Zealand is better placed to manage the risks posed by natural hazards and other disasters
- new legislation, currently progressing through Parliament, aimed at improving the ability of communities to recover more quickly from small to moderate scale emergencies (the most frequent types of emergency in New Zealand).

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Notes

What is a tsunami?

A tsunami is a series of waves generated when a large volume of water in the sea or a lake is rapidly displaced. The first wave will not necessarily be the largest, and large waves may continue arriving many hours after the first wave. Unusual and hazardous currents and surges may continue for hours to days after the largest tsunami waves have passed.

What's the risk to New Zealand?

New Zealand's entire coast is at risk of tsunami. A tsunami can violently flood coastlines, causing devastating property damage, injuries and loss of life. Tsunami waves can smash into the shore like a wall of water, or move in as a fast moving flood or tide.

How much warning will we have?

Official warnings, through channels such as TV, radio, social media, apps and sirens, are possible for distant and regional source tsunami, which may take hours to reach New Zealand. However, a local source tsunami could arrive within minutes, which means there won't be time for an official warning.

This means you must move immediately to the nearest high ground or as far inland as you can if you are at the coast and you 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.

Will this exercise impact on the public?

Exercise Tangaroa is not designed to involve the public. However, some local authorities may choose to test public warning and evacuation procedures as

part of the exercise. Where this happens, the local authorities involved will advise communities of their intentions to ensure it's clear that it's an exercise and not a real event.