

NEWS

24 countries taking part in tsunami drill

SOURCE(S): [UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION \(UNISDR\) \(/ORGANIZATIONS/1171\)](#)



By Brigitte Leoni

Memories of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami which claimed some 230,000 lives, will be revived this week as 24 countries take part in one of the largest tsunami simulations ever staged.

Disaster management officials from Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France (La Reunion), India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor Leste and Yemen will be involved in the two-day drill on September 7 and 8.

The exercise is part of the Indian Ocean Wave simulation called IOWave16 organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and for the first time it will be monitored by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and partners as part of the build up to World Tsunami Awareness Day on November 5 and International Day for Disaster Reduction on October 13 which is focused this year on reducing disaster mortality.

IOWave16 will comprise two scenarios: the first will simulate an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 south of Sumatra, Indonesia, on 7 September and the second will simulate an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 in the Makran Trench south of Iran and Pakistan on 8 September.

Both exercises will be conducted in real time lasting for about 12 hours and ITEWC will issue 15 tsunami bulletins to both national and regional stakeholders through GTS, email, fax, SMS as well as web.

The drill will simulate giant tsunami waves travelling across the Indian Ocean. UNISDR will be observing the response of the Indian and Seychelles National Tsunami Warning Centres (NTWC) and the performance of their national and local Disaster Management Offices in implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

“Since the Indian Ocean tsunami, we have made considerable progress in setting up our national warning system, but for a low frequency, high impact disaster such as tsunami, maintaining the awareness and response levels of the coastal communities at high level during all times is a major challenge. Drills are a major and necessary operation to test the emergency system and to verify the missing gaps in the last mile of the early warning chain which is most critical,” said Dr Srinivasa Kumar Tummala, Head of the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre.

The Sumatra scenario will commence at 0300 hours UTC on 7 September and will immediately trigger a series of emergency actions in both Seychelles and India. The Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation Systems (IOTWMS) Tsunami Service Providers (TSP) of Australia, India and Indonesia will provide exercise bulletins and detailed tsunami threat advice on their password-protected websites, and will send notification messages to their Tsunami Warning Focal Points.

“The primary objective of IOWave16 is to involve all the emergency partners in the exercise and to identify the gaps that need to be addressed in the future,” said Regina Prosper from the government of Seychelles.

“We were lucky in 2004 as Seychelles only lost 3 people but we cannot take the risk to be lucky. We need to make sure that all exposed populations are alerted as soon as possible and assisted smoothly with evacuation to safer grounds at best,” she said.

Odisha, a coastal state in the eastern coast of India, has 485 kms of coastline dotted with 328 villages. About 30,000 people will evacuate during this tsunami drill. Seychelles has 491 kms of coastline with a population of roughly 93,000 inhabitants and will be testing a key infrastructure and essential services in this particular exercise.

The Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (ICG/IOTWMS) was formed in response to the tsunami on December 26th 2004. The epicenter of the earthquake was off the west coast of Sumatra and it was one of the deadliest disaster events in recorded history triggering a series of tsunamis along the coastlines of most countries bordering the Indian Ocean with waves up to 30 metres.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) was mandated by the international community to coordinate the establishment of the System during the course of several international and regional meetings, including the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 18 – 22 January 2005), and the Phuket Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements (Phuket, Thailand, 28 and 29 January 2005).

The 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the global plan for reducing disaster losses has key targets for reducing disaster mortality, the numbers of people affected, economic losses and damage to critical infrastructure. It also has a target for increased access to multi-hazard early warning systems.

[Read the original story here \(http://www.unisdr.org/archive/50128\)](http://www.unisdr.org/archive/50128)

[World Tsunami Awareness Day \[ext. link\] \(http://www.unisdr.org/2016/tsunamiday/\)](http://www.unisdr.org/2016/tsunamiday/)

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