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U.S. Navy photo by Javier Chagoya

NSAM Hosts Tsunami Preparedness Seminar

By MC2 Victoria Ochoa

As part of Tsunami Awareness Week in California, Naval Support Activity Monterey (NSAM) joined with various city, county, state and federal representatives to host a Tsunami Preparedness Seminar, March 29. Personnel assigned and attached to NSAM had the chance to listen to subject matter experts and educate themselves on how to be better prepared in the event of a tsunami.

"Tsunamis are defined as a long, high sea waves caused by an earthquake, submarine, landslide, or other disturbance. Before a tsunami affects a coastal area, there is a "draw back" or an unusual lowering of ocean that exposes the sea floor," said Warren Blier from the National Weather Service. "The draw back means the water will surge back strongly with destructive waves affecting the coastline."

Since an earthquake-driven tsunami could take 10 or more hours to arrive at California shores, cities have adopted different forms of warning systems to advise citizens to move to higher ground. Signs near beaches and along tsunami evacuation routes in Monterey, for instance, warn of tsunamis and point to higher ground. Once higher ground is reached, authorities advise residents to remain in place due to more tsunami waves that could be imminent.

"To keep you and your family safe, there is no need to evacuate miles and miles away. Getting to a safe elevation of 20 feet above sea level in Monterey, or the highest floor of sturdy building will keep you safe during a catastrophe like a tsunami," said NSAM Emergency Manager Josie Burisow.

Preparing beforehand for a worst-case scenario can help service members, faculty and staff know what to do to protect themselves and their families if a

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natural disaster did occur, as well as aiding in recovery after the event.

"Families can prepare by designating a safe meeting point with family members, and making sure that family is not located in inundation zones. Keeping an emergency kit for earthquakes, fire, flood, tsunamis and other natural disasters is also a good idea," Burisow said. "It should have food, water, medications, first aid, extra clothes, a battery operated radio and flashlight as well as important documents."

The tsunami inundation zones can be seen using the California Inundation Maps from the California Geological Survey. The maps are broken up into quadrants to depict the maximum extent of tsunami inundation and to inform citizens of areas that could be affected by tsunami waters.

Residents of Monterey can register their cellphones for emergency messages using the Alert Monterey website at <http://www.alertmontereycounty.org/>. Service members should also update their Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS) if they are in an affected zone to maintain accountability.

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