

PAN PACIFIC TSUNAMI AWARENESS DAY

Seventy percent of the world's tsunamis occur in the Pacific. Ninety percent of the Pacific Islands populations live on the coast or within a short distance of it. In response to a destructive ocean-crossing tsunami caused by the 1960 Chile earthquake, the Tsunami Warning System of the Pacific was inaugurated. Since its inception, the system has had great success in saving lives through timely warnings, hazard risk assessment, mitigation, preparedness, and awareness.

Maintaining high public awareness necessary for tsunami preparedness is challenging because fatal, destructive tsunami events are relatively rare. Although public awareness is high after a tsunami event, as memory of the event fades, so does the public's awareness and readiness.

One effective tool to sustain public awareness has been Hawai'i's annual Tsunami Awareness Month held in April, which reminds the Hawaiian public each year of Hawai'i's tsunami vulnerability.

The declaration of a Pan-Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day (or week or month), encompassing all of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories, could be a useful significant step in sustaining public awareness and tsunami preparedness at no cost.

Recommendations:

- That the members endorse the creation of a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day.
- That SPREP engage with other appropriate CROP organizations at the next meeting of the CROP heads to advance the creation of a Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day.
- That the SPREP Secretariat work with its members to have the first annual Pan Pacific Tsunami Awareness Day in 2013.