



Newport Police Department

169 SW Coast Highway
Newport, Oregon 97365

NPD MEDIA RELEASE

10/11/2012 3:00 PM

Incident: South Beach Tsunami Evacuation Drill

Location: South Beach, Oregon

Date/Time: 10/11/2012 at 10:18 a.m.

Details: The growing awareness of the potential dangers of a major earthquake and tsunami prompted Newport Police Officers, in coordination with Oregon State University's Hatfield Marine Science Center, the City of Newport, and community leaders in the coastal town of Newport to expand the scope of their annual tsunami evacuation drill. The coordinated exercise began at 10:18 a.m. on Thursday, 10/11/2012. The more than 200 participants were from OSU, and the federal and state agencies located on the South Beach peninsula. Employees and residents from the adjacent Coho/Brant district also joined the drill.

A component of the drill involved closing Highway 101 for five minutes to allow participants to safely cross the highway and ascend "Safe Haven Hill". The hill, just west of the south entrance to the Yaquina Bay Bridge, is owned by the Oregon Department of Transportation. With a height of more than 85 feet, the hill is the closest high ground for many South Beach peninsula workers and residents. It is estimated that several thousand people could be accommodated on the hill top. The only other route to Safe Haven Hill passes under the Yaquina Bay Bridge, which would likely be damaged or unsafe after a major earthquake."

"'Safe Haven Hill' serves as a critical assembly point for South Beach peninsula evacuees, and making it accessible to as many people as need it is a high priority for us," said Newport Mayor Mark McConnell. "HMSC has been a great partner, and their activities have helped the city jump-start our outreach efforts to other neighborhoods within the

inundation zone.” The challenge of safely escorting several hundred people across the Oregon Coast’s busiest highway has become a community-wide effort. Although the temporary road closure is an inconvenience to drivers, it is a key component of a realistic drill as it is the fastest route to safety. The first participant reached the hill in less than nine minutes with the last person arriving in eighteen minutes. There were no injuries reported during this event.

A team led by Newport Police Officer Thomas Lekas included the Newport Police Department, Newport Police Volunteers, Lincoln County Emergency Management, Newport Fire Department, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members. Additional participants in the drill were the Oregon Red Cross, Newport Public Works Department, Port of Newport, Rogue Brewery, Oregon Coast Aquarium, Newport City Mayor Mark McConnell, and Newport City Council Members Dean Sawyer and Jeff Bertuleit.

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Information Released By: **Sgt. Tony Garbarino, 541-574-3348**