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Western States Seismic Policy Council Releases Tsunami Report by Pacific Coastal States and Territories

Sacramento, California - The Western States Seismic Policy Council (WSSPC) announces the release of WSSPC Report 2011-01: "Tsunami Hazard Mitigation and Preparedness: A Perspective from State and Territory Tsunami Programs in the High Tsunami Risk Pacific Region". With contributions from Alaska, American Samoa, California, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, and Washington, the Report documents the importance and effectiveness of the state and territorial tsunami programs to prepare local communities at high risk for future damaging tsunamis.

"The Report was prepared to provide a regional perspective of states and territories that share a high probability of tsunami risk to their coastlines", said John G. Parrish, WSSPC Board Chair and Chair of the WSSPC Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Committee. "The states' roles are critical in educating and preparing the public for tsunamis so as to reduce losses to life and property".

The Pacific Rim states and territories have a history of damaging tsunamis caused by both distant and local earthquakes. Since 1946, tsunamis have cost the Pacific U.S. states and territories 392 lives and over \$1.6 billion in damages. Distant earthquakes provide time for warning and evacuation of vulnerable populations from a tsunami, whereas local earthquakes may not. In the event of a large local earthquake that could generate a local tsunami, individuals and communities must be educated to respond appropriately, a role that the states and territories implement through their state tsunami programs requiring sustained community-based preparedness activities.

The recent tragic Japanese tsunami on March 11th highlights the necessity of continuing to have strong state and territory tsunami programs. The Report notes that currently the state tsunami programs are funded through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) authorized by the Tsunami Warning and Education Act of 2006. The Act is due to sunset in September of 2012. The Pacific Rim states and territories support the reauthorization of the Act and clearly affirm the original intent of the Act to provide these partners with 27% of the Act's funding. Local program representatives are unanimous in their belief that the states and territories are in the best position to implement national policies at a community level.

The Report's other Recommendations urge a balanced benefit-cost approach to the proposal to expand the DART buoy system and the creation of a third warning center with the existing needs of the state tsunami programs. Expanding an already extensive system of buoys should not come at the expense of the community-based preparedness activities, especially for local tsunami events, because official warnings through the DART system cannot be implemented. Maintaining a strong partnership among the state and federal organizations in the NTHMP will strengthen and improve tsunami preparedness in the U.S. and its Pacific territories and enable all levels of government to work towards the common goal of saving lives of those at risk from tsunamis along our coastlines.

WSSPC Report 2011-01 is available on the WSSPC website at www.wsspc.org.