

Western States Seismic Policy Council
2011 Awards in Excellence
Outreach to Business/Government

Administering Agency: Washington State Military Department,
Emergency Management Division

Program Name: Disaster Response Training for the Hospitality Industry on
Washington's Coast

Contact: John Schelling, Earthquake Program Manager, Washington State
Military Department, Emergency Management Division

Address: Building 20, Camp Murray, WA 98430

Telephone: 253-512-7084

Email: j.schelling@emd.wa.gov

Program Summary

There has been considerable effort over the last decade to increase awareness of the tsunami risk in Washington. Commitment of tourism firms and training of tourism personnel were two key areas of the warning system where gaps were identified by social science research that was conducted for the Emergency Management Division. This research effort was as part of an assessment of preparedness efforts by hotels and motels along the coast.

In order to address this need, in 2006, the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) Earthquake program developed the Disaster Response Guidebook for Hotels and Motels on Washington's Coast which provides practical advice on how to respond to disasters. Another issue identified in the research is the potential adverse impact of false alarms on the tourism sector and resultant impact on the effectiveness of future warning response. Staff training (that interacts with the tourist population on a daily basis) on how to respond to warnings has been identified as a key issue and is often a cost effective way of improving warning response effectiveness.

Washington's coastal communities experience disaster situations every year. Each disaster has lasting effects, both to people and property. Knowing what to do can reduce fear, anxiety and losses that accompany disasters. The guidebook provides a concise overview of useful information that will assist the hospitality industry on how to respond to disasters. It includes valuable information on how to prepare and respond to various disaster related events such as; tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and floods. This guidebook also includes information on NOAA weather radios, an emergency telephone contact list for each hotel to use, Emergency Utility Checklists, and maps of tsunami evacuation routes in Washington State. One DVD also accompanies this guidebook entitled- Tsunamis in Washington.

A hotel/motel must participate in a workshop at their business where an EMD official will train the manager and their staff on how to prepare and handle certain natural phenomena, specifically tsunamis, and to review and implement the guidebook. By participating in this training each business also receives a NOAA weather radio and is trained on how to use it in an effective and efficient manner. Since its development, hotel/motel owners have used this guidebook numerous times to ensure the safety of their guests and staff should a disaster occur.