



Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group
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January 5, 2015

Western States Seismic Policy Council
Awards in Excellence Selection Committee
801 K Street Suite 1236
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Selection Committee,

We are the co-chairs of the Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group (RCTWG) which promotes resiliency to natural disasters in California's north coast communities (as a member of California's Earthquake Country Alliance). The RCTWG supports the nomination of Cindy Henderson (Emergency Services Manager for Del Norte County OES) and the Prepare Del Norte team for their outstanding leadership role in preparing their communities to respond to large earthquakes and tsunamis.

Del Norte County and, in particular, Crescent City, has the highest tsunami hazard exposure of any community in the lower 48 states. However, Del Norte County is widely recognized as one of the most prepared regions in the nation. This has been achieved under the leadership of Cindy Henderson and through the relentless efforts of the Prepare Del Norte team. Together they have provided emergency response training and exercises; held earthquake and tsunami evacuation drills throughout the county; created innovative educational activities, and developed a website (PrepareDelNorte.com) that supports emergency preparedness and response to large earthquakes, tsunamis and other disasters.

Cindy Henderson has a long-term vision for building community preparedness and response. She has an unfaltering determination to educate and train not only emergency managers and first responders, but community members. Cindy assembled and motivated a large and diverse team from local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, local business, radio and TV stations, and community members. In rural areas, developing strong working relationships between these groups is essential during large-scale emergencies where there will likely be isolated islands of people.

In 2014, Del Norte County's preparedness efforts were truly innovative. The 2014 Earthquake and Tsunami Preparedness Week focused on the 50th anniversary of the historic 1964 tsunami that destroyed much of downtown Crescent City. The main event for Del Norte County's Tsunami Preparedness Week in 2014 was a full county-wide earthquake exercise and tsunami evacuation drill. Cindy coordinated the exercise and drill to test and improve emergency response systems and, equally important, involve people in the community so they developed a physical memory for responding to earthquakes and evacuating the tsunami zone. Cindy's team

also worked with the Red Cross to establish emergency shelters during the drill so that community members could become familiar with Red Cross shelters. In addition, Cindy and the Prepare Del Norte team built an impressive array of ancillary activities leading up to the evacuation drill to ensure that the preparedness benefits reached all age groups in the region. They hosted several events during the week including tsunami awareness training for fishermen and mariners, a “tsunami surge” fun run, newspaper articles, educational radio spots, and a tsunami walking tour. One of the unique programs they developed was the guided historic tsunami walking tour of downtown Crescent City. A diverse group of people collaborated to develop tour stops, a storyboard narrative, interpretive waysides, and people to staff each stop. The tsunami walking tour project will become a permanent feature in Crescent City because permanent wayside kiosks were installed for the event. This event was attended by hundreds of community members and every 8th grader in Del Norte County. A huge success as part of this effort was engaging the business community. Typically businesses are wary of preparedness activities or hazard signage because it is viewed as negative and bad for business. We have never seen the business community become this involved in a preparedness activity. The walking tour provided an opportunity for the community to visit the business district to learn how to be safe from tsunamis anywhere.

The true measure of success can be found in how well a region performs during real emergencies. The programs developed by Cindy Henderson and Prepare Del Norte for Earthquake and Tsunami Preparedness Week are exemplary and provided outreach and education to everyone in the region. Through innovative educational projects like these, everyone is now more educated and prepared for the next great earthquake, tsunami or any other disaster that might strike. Cindy Henderson’s tremendous leadership and the impressive efforts of the Prepare Del Norte team make them very worthy of the Award in Excellence.

Sincerely,



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