



TSUNAMI

What is it?

Tsunami is a Japanese word “tsu”, meaning harbour and “nami”, meaning wave. The phenomenon is usually associated with earthquakes, landslides or volcanic eruptions in, or adjacent to, oceans, and results in sudden movement of the water column. Until recently, tsunamis were called tidal waves, even though the event has nothing to do with tides.

What are the local risks?

There is little recorded history of tsunami in Australia, possibly because Australia has a relatively short history. There is evidence the Australian coast may

have experienced large tsunamis during the past few thousand years, even within areas of the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef, however, is expected to act as its name suggests for tsunami effects from the Pacific Ocean, and provide at least some barrier and protection to the region.

The Mackay Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) regularly receives information about undersea earthquakes and tsunamis around the world.

The recent 5.8 magnitude earthquake in August, 2016, just off the coast of the Whitsundays (the second-largest on record in Queensland) was not large enough

to trigger a tsunami warning. Tsunami warnings are generally only considered for earthquakes above 6.5 magnitude.

[Some of this information has been provided by GeoScience Australia.]

What should I do?

What are the warning signs of a tsunami?

The number one warning sign of a tsunami in Australia is the advice you may receive from the media (on radio, television or internet) or from police and other emergency services. Follow their instructions immediately.

The following are natural signs of a tsunami that you may, but not always, experience when you are near the coast in Australia or overseas. If you notice any of these three warning signs take action.

- A shaking of the ground in coastal regions may reflect the occurrence of a large undersea earthquake nearby that may generate a tsunami.
- As a tsunami approaches shorelines, the sea may, but not always, withdraw from the beach (like a very low and fast tide) before returning as a fast-moving tsunami.
- A roaring sound may precede the arrival of a tsunami.

What should I do if I notice the warning signs or hear a warning from my local emergency services?

- If you are at the beach, immediately move inland or to higher ground.
- If your boat is in deep water and offshore, maintain your position.
- If your boat is berthed or in shallow water, secure your vessel and move inland or to higher ground.
- If you are on the coast and cannot move inland, seek shelter in the upper levels of a stable building.
- Do not return to the coast until you receive official clearance.
- Continue to follow emergency services instructions.

[Information provided by the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre.]

USEFUL LINKS:

Geoscience Australia

ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/hazards/tsunami

Bureau of Meteorology

bom.gov.au/tsunami

