

City Conducting Tsunami Drill Friday

Thursday, 27 March 2014

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

On Friday, Kodiak's emergency responders will be operating in high gear as the community is assaulted by a huge earthquake and inundated in as much water as came ashore 50 years ago during the Great Alaska Earthquake. Fortunately, the emergency will only be on paper, as part of an Alaska Shield tabletop exercise.

Debra Marlar is the public information officer for the Kodiak Area Emergency Services Organization.

"The exercise on Friday has been in the planning for two years. And it is going to be a scenario similar to the '64 quake, in which a simulated tsunami will hit Kodiak, which will give local emergency managers and responders an opportunity to practice response, so we're better prepared if and when the real thing ever happens."

Marlar says several dozen city and borough and others will be participating in the exercise:

"We'll get a call out from the KPD dispatch letting folks on the list to show up to the Emergency Operations Center. I expect that around 8 a.m. There will probably be 30-35 of us that show up. And the way that the organization is structured, and by city and borough code is the city manager. And then under her are command staff, public information officer, liaison officer and safety officer. And then there are operations, planning, and logistics, finance and administration sections."

Marlar says participants are expected to get their call around 8 a.m. Friday morning, but other than a full parking lot at the Kodiak Police Department building where the emergency operations center is located, the public shouldn't notice the exercise at all.

"The thing about this exercise is that those of us involved, we won't know what's going to be thrown at us until we show up. For the purpose of this exercise, it's going to be simulated exercise. I'm not sure, but I believe they might open a shelter for a short period of time to exercise that aspect of it. On Friday, when I show up, I'll know for sure."

Besides city and borough staff, Coast Guard personnel will participating, as will as the Kodiak Amateur Radio Emergency Services team, which will be onsite with their mobile radio communications center.

Marlar says Kodiak Fire Chief Rome Kamai will be the game-master for the exercise:

"And he will have the various scenarios for instance, we're told that a pretend tsunami will come – a large one, and because of that streets will be flooded and people will be trapped. And so the various planning and logistic operations sections will be working with one another to try to rescue people, provide aid, mitigate the circumstances and continue with life in general."

Alaska Shield is organized by the Alaska Department of Homeland Security Department and is being conducted simultaneously with the Department of Defense and Alaska National Guard exercises, Arctic Edge and Vigilant Guard.