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اللجنة الدولية الحكومية لعلوم المحيطات
政府间海洋学委员会

UNESCO - 1, rue Miollis - 75732 Paris cedex 15, France
http://ioc-unesco.org - fax: +33 (0)1 45 68 58 10 - contact phone: +33 (0)1 45 68 39 83/84
E-mail: w.watson-wright@unesco.org

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(Available in English, French and Spanish)

IOC/WWW/TA/BA/ss
20 September 2011

To: ICG/CARIBE EWS Tsunami Warning Focal Points (TWFP)
ICG/CARIBE EWS Tsunami National Contacts (TNC)
ICG/CARIBE EWS Chair and Vice-Chairs

cc: Official National Coordinating Body for liaison with the IOC Member States
Permanent Delegates/Observer Missions to UNESCO of IOC Member States
IOC Officers

Subject: Notification and Instructions Regarding PTWC Communication Tests for the ICG/CARIBE EWS

At the Sixth Meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (ICG/CARIBE EWS-V), held 26-29 April 2011 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, the following was adopted with regards to communication testing by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC):

The ICG agreed to revise the ICG/CARIBE EWS Communications Plan to include the following schedule for PTWC TWFP communication tests:

- (i) Hold communication tests on the first Thursday of every month at 15:30 (UTC/GMT) as from 1st September 2011. Member States TWFP's should report only issues and errors during these monthly tests to the PTWC and IOC Secretariat;
- (ii) Hold twice yearly TWFP "No Notice" verification communication tests. For these tests, Member States' TWFPs shall verify PTWC communication (and all means received and not received) within one (1) hour of the "No Notice" test;
- (iii) All verifications by Countries for issues from monthly tests shall be sent to the PTWC within one (1) hour to facilitate "active action" or "repetitive action" education on a monthly basis;

.../...

Chairperson

Dr Sang-Kyung BYUN
Principal Research Scientist
Climate Change & Coastal Disaster
Research Dept.
Korea Ocean Research & Development Institute
Ansan, P.O. Box 29,
425-600 Seoul
REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Executive Secretary

Dr Wendy WATSON-WRIGHT
Intergovernmental Oceanographic
Commission — UNESCO
1, rue Miollis
75732 Paris Cedex 15,
FRANCE

Vice-Chairpersons

Prof. Peter M HAUGAN
Director, Geophysical Institute
University of Bergen
Allegaten 70
5007 Bergen
NORWAY

Dr Atanas PALAZOV
Director, Institute of Oceanology – Varna
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
P.O. Box 152
Varna 9000
BULGARIA

Capt. Frederico Antonio SARAIVA
NOGUEIRA
Directorate of Hydrography and Navigation
Rue Barão de Jaceguai, s/n°
Ponta da Armação
Niterói, Rio de Janeiro
CEP 24 048 900
BRAZIL

Prof. Yutaka MICHIDA
University of Tokyo
Member of National Committee for IOC
Kashinoha 5-1-5
Kashiwa 277-8564
Chiba
JAPAN

Prof. Adoté Blim BLIVI
Chef de Recherche
Head of CGILE
Ministère de l'Enseignement
Supérieur et de la Recherche
University of Lomé,
B.P. 1515
Lomé 228
TOGO

- (iv) The ICG **instructed** WG 3 on Warning Dissemination and Communication to evaluate automated feedback mechanisms for communication tests and report to the Seventh session of the ICG.

*The ICG further agreed that the Technical Secretariat notifies ICG Member States of the testing to be held routinely. It also **encouraged** Member States to internally document messages received from PTWC and others.*

This letter is to notify that the start of the above-described monthly communication tests has been delayed from the 1 September 2011 target date to the first Thursday in October - October 6, 2011 at 1530 UTC/GMT. The purpose of the tests is to routinely ensure that all of the designated methods of communication between PTWC and each Tsunami Warning Focal Point (TWFP) are working properly and capable of alerting each TWFP on a 24x7 basis in the event of a potential or actual tsunami.

TWFPs should expect to receive the test message within a few minutes of issuance by all of their designated communication methods. These may include:

- 1) Global Telecommunications System (GTS) using World Meteorological Organization product header "WECA41 PHEB", the same product header used by PTWC to issue a Tsunami Watch for the CARIBE-EWS
- 2) Aeronautical Fixed Telecommunications Network (AFTN) coming from "PHEBYMYT"
- 3) Email - coming from "ptwc@ptwc.noaa.gov"
- 4) Telefax – sent to designated fax numbers

TWFPs should check to ensure that the test message was received via all of their designated communication methods. A response is not required if the message was quickly received by all methods. However, notify PTWC as soon as possible about any methods that failed or were delayed by more than just a few minutes. Notification to PTWC should be made via email to the following address: comms@ptwc.noaa.gov. Issues emailed to this address will be handled by PTWC and also forwarded to the IOC for their records and/or follow-up. Please describe the problem and include the email address of the person or persons with whom PTWC should correspond regarding the issue. Of course, PTWC can be contacted by other means such as letter, telephone or fax if necessary, but using that email address ensures that a consistent record of all communication issues is maintained and it provides a single location for PTWC to track the issues.

Below is how the body of the regularly scheduled communications test should appear.

...PTWC MONTHLY COMMUNICATION TEST FOR THE CARIBE-EWS...

THIS IS A SCHEDULED TEST OF THE COMMUNICATION METHODS USED TO DISSEMINATE TSUNAMI INFORMATION FROM THE PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER TO THE CARIBE-EWS TSUNAMI WARNING FOCAL POINTS.

THIS TEST IS CONDUCTED ON THE FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 1530 UTC. THE MESSAGE IS SENT BY SEVERAL COMMUNICATIONS METHODS INCLUDING THE GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM OR GTS... THE AERONAUTICAL FIXED TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK OR AFTN... BY EMAIL... AND BY TELEFAX.

.../...

THIS MESSAGE SHOULD ARRIVE BY ALL DESIGNATED METHODS WITHIN A FEW MINUTES OF ITS BEING DISSEMINATED. TSUNAMI WARNING FOCAL POINTS SHOULD CHECK THAT IT WAS RECEIVED BY ALL METHODS IN A TIMELY FASHION.

RESPONSE - IT IS ONLY NECESSARY TO RESPOND IF THE TEST WAS UNACCEPTABLY DELAYED OR NOT RECEIVED BY ONE OR MORE DESIGNATED COMMUNICATION METHODS. IN THAT CASE... PLEASE NOTIFY THE PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER BY EMAIL... INDICATING WHICH METHOD OR METHODS FAILED AND THE EMAIL OF A PERSON OR PERSONS TO CORRESPOND WITH REGARDING THE PROBLEM.

PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER EMAIL – COMMS@PTWC.NOAA.GOV

THE PACIFIC TSUNAMI WARNING CENTER WILL WORK TO RESOLVE ANY PROBLEMS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS TEST.

Regarding the twice-per-year unscheduled “no notice” communications tests, they will be conducted similar to how they have been conducted in the past, with a response requested from all TWFPs. The main difference will be that a response will be requested within an hour of the test to ensure all TWFPs are capable of being alerted quickly on a 24x7 basis. In addition, as with the scheduled tests, the response is now requested to be sent to PTWC via the email address: comms@ptwc.noaa.gov.

The “Communication Plan for the Interim Tsunami Advisory Information Service to the Caribbean Sea and Adjacent Regions” (dated 19 December 2007) will be updated to reflect these and other changes and re-distributed to the CARIBE-EWS Member States prior to the ICG/CARIBE-EWS-VII.

Thank you for your attention to these tests. Ensuring the operational functionality of all communications methods is critical to the effectiveness of the CARIBE-EWS.

Yours sincerely,



Wendy Watson-Wright
Executive Secretary, IOC
Assistant Director-General, UNESCO