

CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU
Department of Emergency Management

Tsunami Warning

July 29, 2025



September 23, 2025



Incident Overview and Summary



Fast & Frequent Communication
Effective Leadership
Teamwork



Tsunami Planning Factors

Dynamic Planning Hazards

Two distinct threats. Short tsunami vs. long tsunami.

Timing of tsunami.

No notice and trigger variability.

No opportunity to pre-position resources or provide services.

No common direction for evacuation.

Kamehameha Highway, Farrington Highway, and Kalaniana'ole Highway.

It is an island wide incident.

There are not enough resources at any given time to meet the demand.

There is limited to no time to recall resources.

Dynamic Hazard



Tsunami Incident Objectives

Objectives of a tsunami evacuation

Protect life. Move people in tsunami zones inward and/or upward before first wave arrival.

Prioritize access, functional needs, and schools.

Direct and control traffic into and out of danger areas.

Deliver clear and consistent public warnings.

Safeguard critical facilities and resources.

Hold evacuees until all clear.

Prepare for search and rescue operations.

Support mass care and family reunification after life safety actions.

Demobilize resources after all clear.

Dynamic Hazard



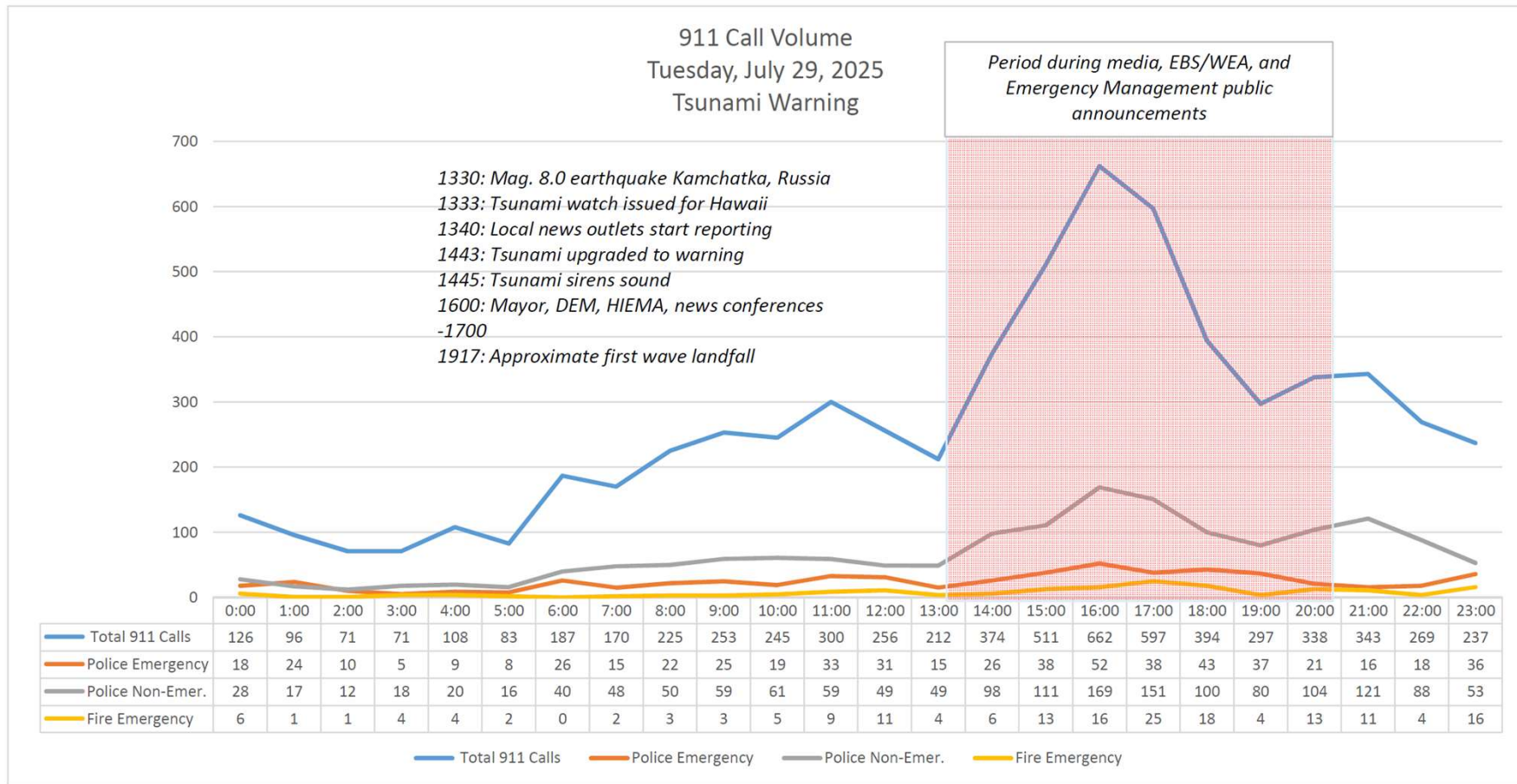
Incident Overview and Summary

Time	Action
1:25 pm	Earthquake off east coast of Kamchatka, Russia.
1:31 pm	Tsunami Watch issued for Hawaii (est first impacts 7:17pm).
1:32 pm	EOC Activated.
1:37 pm	First HNL Alert Tsunami Watch.
2:43 pm	Tsunami Warning issued.
2:47 pm	HNL Alert Tsunami Warning begins evacuation.
3:22 pm	EAS/WEA Issued.
4:10 pm	Sirens activated.
10:39 pm	Tsunami Warning canceled. Tsunami Advisory.
10:51 pm	HNL Alert Tsunami cancellation.
12:00 am	EOC deactivated.

Times are approximate



911 Call Volume Against Public Messaging



Honolulu Police Department



HPD Incident Overview

Time	Action
2:30 pm	Initial activation/notification of tsunami incident.
3:00 pm	HPD PIO informed of updates about tsunami and information posted online/social media. Dispatch notified of EOC full activation. Non-essential/non-sworn personnel released.
3:03 pm	Notified of EOC full activation.
3:30 pm	Dispatch notified DOC activated.
3:45 pm	Refuge list distributed and posted.
4:10 pm	Patrol districts notified of holdover and bringing on coming personnel in early.
4:12 pm	6 EMRC requested by D-8 to man the bypass road.
4:15 pm	D-6 evacuations commenced.
5:30 pm	Sgt. Tanioka requested that officers check Camp Erdman to ensure no children were remaining.

HPD Incident Overview

Time	Action
4:30 pm	D-1 evacuations commenced, HONU relocated to Manoa District Park, all special duty jobs cancelled.
5:10 pm	Third activation/notification of tsunami evacuation siren.
6:15 pm	Notification of wave height approx. 6' at Midway atoll.
6:49 pm	Farrington Hwy at Waiomea St closed no westbound, Fort Weaver at North Rd no Makai Bound. Fort Weaver at Papipi Rd no Makai Bound.
8:58 pm	D-8 released EMRC from traffic post.
10:04 pm	All roads open per D-8 Capt. N. Han.
11:45 pm	Demobilization.

07-29-25 Tsunami Evacuation

POSITIVES:

- Early warning alert systems were effective in timely community notification.
- HPD Department Operations Center (DOC) facilitated department-wide coordination.
- Technology integration enhanced collaboration between the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and DOC.
- Strong cooperation and communication guided patrol and support operations.
- City DTS conditional access to traffic cameras improved real-time situational awareness.
- Full activation of EOC enabled effective use of first responders and partner agencies.



07-29-25 Tsunami Evacuation



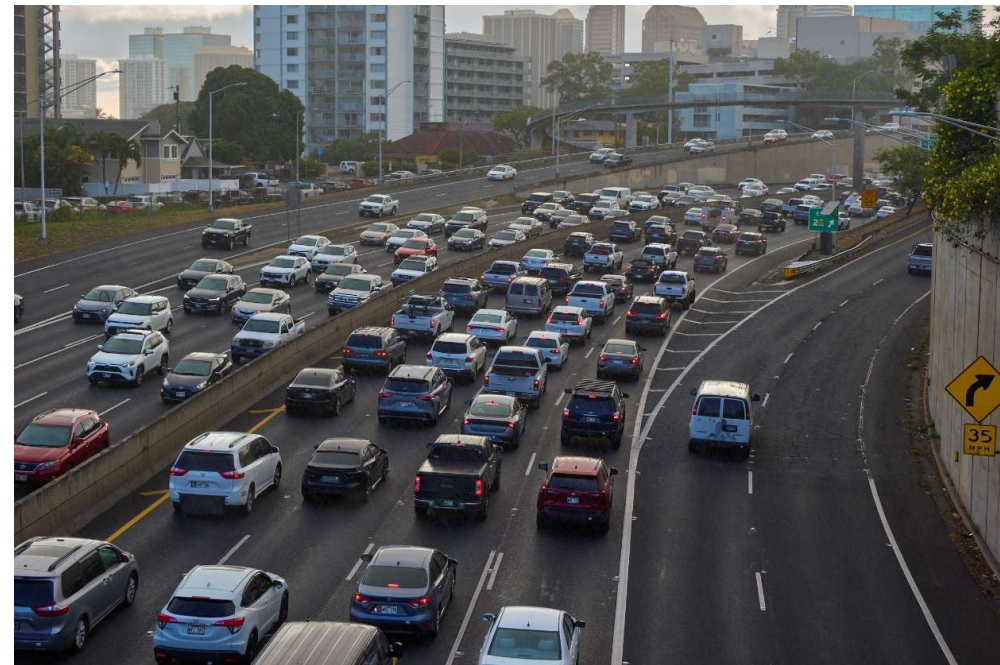
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT:

- Some agencies were not fully synchronized on evacuation locations due to rapid warning issuance.
- HPD EOC personnel were overwhelmed with calls/texts, affecting EOC function and briefings.
- DOC overcrowding caused information overload, conflicting orders, and blocked IRC workstations.
- Need for expanded City & County CCTV coverage, especially in regional areas.
- Communication gaps noted between HIEMA and DEM (e.g., Kolekole Pass opening).
- Need for dedicated PIO at DEM EOC to unify media messaging.
- Video link for state briefings was inconsistent between DOC and EOC.
- Need for dedicated radio channel connecting DOC, EOC, and Joint Traffic Management Center (JTMC).

07-29-25 Tsunami Evacuation

Recommendations & Next Steps:

- Enhance inter-agency communication protocols to ensure timely and accurate evacuation coordination.
- Implement strategies to reduce phone/text request overload on EOC personnel (e.g., centralized information desk or digital portal).
- Optimize DOC workspace layout to prevent overcrowding and ensure clear communication flow.
- Expand City & County CCTV infrastructure, prioritizing underserved regional and remote areas.
- Strengthen communication channels between HIEMA and DEM to avoid operational gaps.
- Assign a dedicated Public Information Officer (PIO) within the DEM EOC for coordinated media messaging.
- Upgrade video conferencing systems to ensure stable and reliable DOC-to-EOC connectivity.
- Establish a dedicated radio channel linking DOC, EOC, and JTMC for seamless real-time communication.



Department of Transportation Services

Traffic Signals and Roadway Operations

Unified Bridge Command at Joint Traffic Management Center

- ✓ Real-time traffic coordination
- ✓ City and County DTS and Hawai'i DOT
- ✓ First Responders: HPD, HFD, EMS, Ocean Safety, and 911

Actions:

1. Coordinate with HPD actions at key roadways and intersections
2. Adjust traffic signal timing in real-time to prioritize inland (mauka) travel
3. Notify the DEM-EOC of changing conditions



CITY AND COUNTY OF
HONOLULU

Department of Transportation Services

Multimodal Transportation Network

HNL Transit

- ✓ Skyline
- ✓ TheBus/Handi-Van
- ✓ Biki
- ✓ Bicycle/Pedestrian



Actions:

1. TheBus/Handi-Van provided safe refuge for passengers out of inundation zones
2. Transit service paused at 6:00pm ahead of the predicted tsunami arrival time; Biki use continued

Department of Transportation Services

LESSONS LEARNED

Traffic Operations

- ✓ Adjusted messaging for evacuations can **maximize available roadway capacity**
 - Shelter-in-place
 - Vertical evacuation
 - Walk or bike if able
- ✓ Explain that people in vehicles **don't need to get home to safety** – Safety is **anywhere outside of the inundation zone**
- ✓ **Not everyone needs to evacuate** if they are already safe
- ✓ Emphasize that **walking can be more effective** than driving to safety

HNL Transit

- ✓ Pursue enhanced **real-time messaging** targeted to transit riders through new Transit App and HNL Alerts
- ✓ **Message regularly to media** with updates on transit operations
- ✓ Plan and establish TheBus and Handi-Van **meeting points** at major transit centers or refuge centers for passenger needs
- ✓ Investigate **Skyline stations as safe spaces** for evacuation
- ✓ Promote Skyline as a way to **bypass congestion on H-1**



CITY AND COUNTY OF
HONOLULU



Honolulu Fire Department

Tsunami Response - July 29, 2025



Timeline of Events

1349 Hours

- A Tsunami Watch was issued for the State of Hawaii with an **expected arrival time of 1917 hours**; the City and County of Honolulu's (City) Department of Emergency Management (DEM) activates the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and the HFD is notified and activates its Quick Response Force (QRF).

1415 Hours

- The HFD's Department Emergency Coordinator reports to the City's EOC.



Timeline of Events

1455 Hours

- The HFD's representative reports to the Joint Traffic Management Center (JTMC) Command Bridge.

1600 Hours

- The HFD Incident Management Team (IMT) is notified for activation, and planning and logistics are initiated.

1742 Hours

- HFD companies in inundation zones are notified (≈ 90 minutes before forecasted landfall) to begin evacuation procedures.



Timeline of Events

1812 Hours

- HFD companies confirm evacuation is in progress (≈ 60 minutes before forecasted landfall).

1842 Hours

- HFD companies are fully evacuated and staged at safe locations (≈ 30 minutes before forecasted landfall).



Timeline of Events

2130 Hours

- The HFD IMT is demobilized following the “All Clear” from the City’s EOC.

2230 Hours

- The JTMC Command Bridge is deactivated.

2400 Hours

- The HFD’s representatives is released from the City’s EOC.



HFD Specific Response

➤ HFD QRF Activation

Convened at the HFD Headquarters to determine initial response actions and coordinated evacuation planning of its assets (fire stations and support facilities)

➤ Station and Facility Readiness

Identified fire stations and facilities in tsunami zones and directed relocation of personnel, apparatuses, and essential equipment to safe areas



HFD Specific Response

➤ Interagency Coordination

Deployed HFD representatives to the City's EOC and JTMC Command Bridge for collaboration and situational awareness

➤ Operational Continuity

Maintained readiness and continued response operations and issued guidance for units in inundation zones to exercise caution



HFD Specific Response

➤ Information Monitoring and Coordination

Tracked updates from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the DEM's Veoci platform, live feeds, and other sources and provided situation reports and briefings to command staff and field units

➤ Logistics and Support

Mobilized the HFD IMT for cost tracking, logistics, and planning and ensured communications equipment, mobile trailers, and essential supplies were deployed or prepped



HFD Specific Response

➤ Dispatch and Call Management

Upstaffed the HFD's Fire Communication Center (FCC) and its Alpha location, managed the increased call volume, issued timed evacuation alerts, and coordinated the call flow with the City Honolulu Emergency Services Department's Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

➤ Postevent Actions

Assisted with demobilization, damage assessments of facilities in evacuation zones, and documentation of lessons learned



Lessons Learned/Areas for Improvement

- Establish a clear lead agency and unified command structure
- Strengthen communication between the EOC, the JTMC, the FCC, and field units
- Standardize response protocols across agencies
- Clarify evacuation zones--Extreme Tsunami versus Tsunami, including better guidance on what zone to evacuate



Lessons Learned/Areas for Improvement

- Clarify operational expectations for first responders in inundation zones
- Improve readiness of logistics, equipment, and communication systems
- Conduct joint training and exercises with partner agencies for tsunami response

HONOLULU EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

2025 TSUNAMI BRIEF



ENTERING

TSUNAMI
HAZARD
ZONE



TIMELINE OF EVENTS

13:29

Communications Center advised of Tsunami Watch

13:43

Department representative received EOC activation. Preparation of disaster vehicles begins

14:00

EMS Assistant Chief of Operations notified all EMS units of Tsunami Watch

EMS UNIT PROTOCOLS INITIATED AT 14:00

- FUEL AMBULANCES and DISTRICT VEHICLES
- CHARGE ALL RADIOS/LAPTOPS/CELL PHONES
- LIMIT UNNECESSARY DRIVING
- TRANSPORT PATIENTS TO THE CLOSEST HOSPITAL

***ALL DEPARTMENT EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS STAFF NOTIFIED
AND HELD OVER***

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

14:46

Tsunami Warning
Issued

15:11

Internal IMT set up. Water, MREs, tent,
mini CRD, CRD, generators ready for
deployment

14:55

Out of service ambulances moved
out of inundation zone by Support
Services

15:23

Tsunami Warning upgraded to
Threat. JTMC Comms bridge
activated

15:08

CORE Personnel held over to
assist with homeless evacuations

16:00

Department conference call with Deputy Director,
Chiefs, and Safety Officer. EMS Administrators at
HQ. PIO and Director reported to DEM EOC for
press conference.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

16:11

911 system overwhelmed with bedridden patient evacuation requests, EOC notified

16:30

2nd EOC brief forwarded to department, Governor signed Emergency Proclamation

17:05

Internal HESD brief with leadership staff

17:10

2 HOUR WARNING

17:45

Department representative attends State coordination meeting

17:49

EMS Assistant Chief of Operations confirmed evacuation plan for EMS HQ

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

18:08

EMS Assistant Chief of Operations confirmed all units are in the inundation evacuation status

18:30

1 HOUR WARNING

All EMS responses into inundation zone stopped

18:11

EMS units in inundation zones evacuated and relocated

18:39

CORE investigated a large homeless gathering at Lanakila Park

18:17

CORE staged in safe zone in Nu'uuanu

19:11

Estimated arrival of 1st impact

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

20:30

Kahuku EMS responded to an MVC in the inundation zone. KKU canceled on scene

21:38

EMS Assistant Chief of Operations advised all EMS units to return to normal operations and back to stations

21:00

EMS IAP developed and released, in the event of impact

22:00

EMSCC returns to normal operations. JTMC bridge closed

21:30

EOC shift to return people home from shelters. HESD cleared to demobilize

23:30

HESD released from EOC; EOC return to normal operations

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Honolulu EMS Responded to 143 Calls Throughout the Entire Event

- A total of 123 EMS calls occurred before the estimated impact, leading to 66 patients being transported by EMS.
- During the estimated time of impact until the all-clear was issued, there were 20 EMS calls, resulting in 11 patients being transported by Honolulu EMS.

Honolulu Ocean Safety Department



Honolulu Ocean Safety Department

Tsunami Response July 29, 2025



- Ocean Safety received the preliminary alert for the Tsunami at 1:33 pm.
- The Department immediately began having preliminary discussions based on the magnitude and location of the quake
- When the warning was received at 2:43 pm., the Department made notifications to the entire workforce and began implementing tsunami action plans including warning announcements from towers.
- The lifeguards staffed towers until beaches were cleared or 5 pm.
- Mobile responders continued to respond to emergencies and make warning announcements at beaches without lifeguard towers.
- At the same time, preparations were made to pull back all equipment in the inundation zone for post event response.
- Lifeguards staged at pre-determined spots across the island and were in communication with OSD dispatch.
- At 10 pm, after no significant reported impacts, lifeguards began to return to patrol areas to assess conditions and return equipment.
- At 11 pm, lifeguards were off duty for the evening.
- At 6 am the following morning, patrols were made to assess any coastal damage (none found).

Lessons Learned and Areas for Improvement

Improvement Area	Recommended Action	Agency
Alert & Warning	WEAs to be issued by DEM not HI-EMA with local information.	DEM
Public Information	Improved coordination with State on press briefings.	DEM/MAYCOMM
Public Information	ASL interpreter should be used.	DEM/MAYCOMM
Public Information	Social media platforms to reach younger populations.	DEM/MAYCOMM
Incident Management	Traffic flow/gridlock study.	DTS/HPD/DEM
Public Education	Tsunami Zone and Extreme Tsunami Zone.	DEM
Public Education	Vertical Evacuation.	DEM
Public Education	Pedestrian Evacuation.	DEM
Public Education	Car pooling.	DEM
Public Education	Social and Individual Responsibilities.	DEM



Briefing Conclusion

The response worked. Many felt discomfort and inconvenience, yet we met every objective. We moved all who needed to move, and all who chose to move, into safe locations. Traffic was clear from tsunami zones. We isolated vulnerable areas. No one was injured. We stood together, acted with purpose, and proved our readiness.

What are your questions?

Mahalo

