



TESTING AUSTRALIA'S TSUNAMI READINESS

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Australia's preparedness for a major tsunami is being put to the test today with a full-scale exercise, PacWave18, involving multiple agencies responding to the simulated threat of a tsunami bearing down on Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania.

The exercise is being coordinated by the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre (JATWC) which was established following the destructive Indian Ocean Tsunami on Boxing Day in 2004.

The centre uses the combined resources of the Bureau of Meteorology and Geoscience Australia to detect and monitor tsunami threat in our region.

Today's exercise simulates a tsunami impacting much of Australia's east coast following a very strong earthquake south of the Solomon Islands.

The National Earthquake Alerts Centre, operated by Geoscience Australia, monitors earthquakes globally and alerts the JATWC of earthquakes that could generate a tsunami.

Geoscience Australia senior seismologist Dr Jonathan Bathgate said about 50 potentially tsunamigenic earthquakes were detected every year and the impact of a tsunami hitting vulnerable, low-lying areas on the Australian coast could be significant.

Bureau of Meteorology tsunami and storm surge manager Dr Yuelong Miao said the simulated tsunami from today's exercise, if it were real, would have resulted in major inundation of Australian states and territories.

"Unfortunately, we can't prevent tsunamis from occurring, but the expertise we provide gives our emergency services the best head start to protect lives and property," Dr Miao said.

"Every second counts in responding to a tsunami, which is why we've deployed state of the art detection systems in the Indian and Pacific oceans and have a team of experts operating around the clock.

"We regularly run exercises with simulated tsunamis to ensure we and emergency services are well-prepared in the event of an actual tsunami."

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