

Tsunami threat passes with little impact

January 24, 2022



An underground volcano that erupted near Tonga caused concern along the Oregon and California coasts Saturday morning.

The volcanic eruption Friday night caused significant damage from tsunamis and ash in Tonga, but it sent waves more than 5,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean. Around 7 a.m., notices from the Coos County Sheriff's Office, Curry County Sheriff's Office and the National Weather Service warned of tsunamis along the Pacific Northwest.

The waves were expected to reach Northern California shortly after 7 a.m., parts of Curry County by 7:30 and the Charleston and Bandon areas in Coos County shortly after 8 a.m.

The warnings urged those in low-lying areas near the coast to be cautious and to evacuate to higher grounds.

When the waves did arrive, the impact was minimal with waves rising less than three feet. But the impact in the ocean could be seen for hours as massive waves could be seen up and down the coast.

In Charleston, waves crashing into rocks sent plumes of water soaring 50 feet or more into the air. Park ranges at Sunset Bay shut down the beach for several hours as the active waves and strong tides presented a danger.

There were no reports of damage in the region, although the active ocean did draw large crowds interested in seeing the after effect of the volcano more than 5,000 miles away.

Big parts of Coos County, Curry County and Del Norte County are in the tsunami danger zone and have had major impacts from previous tsunamis.

Crescent City knows firsthand the dangers of tsunamis after a massive earthquake in Alaska sent waves that crashed into Crescent City in 1964. A 21-foot wave slammed into downtown Crescent City, killing 11 people and devastating 29 blocks downtown. Years later, Crescent City had links to another massive tsunami when debris from a tsunami in Alaska washed ashore in the city.