



Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel and Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn, standing in back, pose with delegates from the Philippines at the Elk Creek Road emergency cache site.

Filipino delegates, Cannon Beach officials share emergency advice

Cannon Beach sets the emergency preparation pace

By Dani Palmer
Cannon Beach Gazette

Cannon Beach residents and business owners are expected to play a big part in the city's emergency response plan. That community approach attracted nine delegates from the Philippines who came to Cannon Beach Thursday, Sept. 17, to learn about preparedness and response.

"It means that we're out there. We're noticed as an aware community," Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel said. "That's important."

Seeking better response

The delegates, with backgrounds in law enforcement, emergency management and government, asked questions and offered suggestions for improvement.

They came to the United States through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' International Vis-

itor Leadership Program to learn more about emergency preparedness, search and rescue and disaster recovery programs from Washington, D.C. to Cannon Beach.

City administrator for Pasay City, Philippines, Dennis Bernard N. Acorda said his nation is limited financially but can still learn from the United States.

"Our takeaway is to bring something home so we can respond to emergencies in a better way," he said.

Typhoons and flooding are common for the country.

Facing the threat

An Oregon State University study concluded there was a 40 percent chance of a major Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake off the West Coast in the next 50 years.

Visitors to Cannon Beach were shown South County evacuation maps, go bags and emergency cache sites. Routes outlined by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Resources show residents and visitors where to go in case of a distant or local tsunami. In a tsunami originating in Alaska or Japan, residents of Cannon Beach would have hours of warning. In a local event,

however, evacuation time would be reduced to 15 minutes.

The city is working on adding more evacuation route signage for residents and visitors, Steidel said, and practicing with events like Race the Wave, a fun run designed to familiarize residents with routes to higher ground.

The city has three emergency cache sites, he said, storing essential supplies for residents and visitors. Barrels can be purchased by those who live in the inundation zone and want to have access to personal items.

Go bags should hold food and water to last for at least 24 hours, and most likely much longer. If the coast gets hit by a 9.0 magnitude quake, Steidel said, Cannon Beach could "hang out to dry for a week."

While trees and telephone poles are concerns for Cannon Beach officials, downed power lines are greater risks, according to police chief Jason Schermerhorn. The city is working on implementing underground utilities — so far, a slow and expensive process.

Since Cannon Beach's medical clinic is in the inundation zone, the city may need to rely on retired doctors, Steidel said, includ-



Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel points something out to Pasay City Administrator Dennis Bernard N. Acorda on the beach.

ing a physician who lives outside the tsunami hazard zone and has prepared his own makeshift clinic.

Disaster risk reduction and management chief Ritche Van Angeles of Pasig, Philippines, advised the city to consider solar-powered blinking signs for potential night evacuation.

Van Angeles also suggested identifying households acquiring special needs transport, a step his city has taken.

"To be an emergency planner, you must have a big imagination," he said. "You must think of things others wouldn't think of."

Race the Wave event a joint effort among agencies

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"Muscle memory" is important because a resident should not be standing in their pajamas at 2 a.m. wondering where to go should an earthquake strike, she said.

"Knowing how to get to high ground from wherever you are is the first step," Clatsop County Emergency Manager Tiffany Brown added.

Signage is essential she said, with 120 evacuation signs now placed throughout the county.

Along with signage, Cannon Beach continues to prepare for disaster with three emergency storage sites, a sophisticated emergency plan and community outreach. Their efforts are supplemented at the state and federal levels, which encourage residents and visitors to develop their own emergency plan.

An opportunity to 'get our act together'

More than 100 racers started at NeCus' Park, then followed a scenic evacuation route through the city, finishing up outside of the tsunami inundation zone at the Elk Creek Road emergency cache site. Completing the evacuation route, they were treated to an Emergency Preparedness Fair, with information and maps supplied by experts.

Noelle Pollack and Olivia Berry with the Federal Emergency Management Agency stressed the need for developing a family communication plan.

Cannon Beach residents Julie Sackett and Marlene Reynolds were especially interested in preparing their pets for an emergency. Reynolds said the information they received made the possibility of a large quake and tsunami "less overwhelming."

The women took a close look at that evacuation map, also available at OregonTsunami.org, as an iPhone app, at local fire stations and on Cannon Beach's city website. "We just figured this was an opportunity to get our act together," Reynolds said.

Race the Wave was a joint effort between Cannon Beach, Clatsop County Office of Emergency Management, Oregon Office of Emergency Management, FEMA, and others. U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici and state Rep. Deborah Boone were in attendance, along with local leaders such as Cannon Beach Mayor Sam Steidel and City Manager Brant Kucera.

The Cannon Beach Children's Center participated and will receive entry fee proceeds.

"It's really a great thing to get all these different agencies — federal, state and city — involved in running a race and educating people about emergency preparedness," Cannon Beach Children's Center's Board of Directors President Barb Knop said.

That collaborative effort will be needed when a real disaster hits, officials noted.

"It's such an easy and fun way to be ready," Ryan Hansen said.

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