

# Tsunami awareness meeting focuses on hospitality

By Cynthia Washicko  
EO Media Group

The emphasis was on communication at a meeting for hospitality business owners and employees on keeping visitors to the coast of Oregon informed about the dangers of a tsunami.

The Nov. 2 meeting, hosted by Karen Parmelee, Geo-Hazards Awareness Coordinator for the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, is part the OEM's newly launched "Tsunami Safe: Hospitality Begins with Safety" program. Jon Rahl, assistant general manager for the City of Seaside Visitors Bureau, and Planning Director Kevin Cupples were among those in attendance.

The program calls for training for management and staff, tsunami awareness education for employees and the dissemination of tsunami awareness information to guests in order to prepare workers and visitors for a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and possible tsunami. So far around 30 hotels along the Oregon coast are

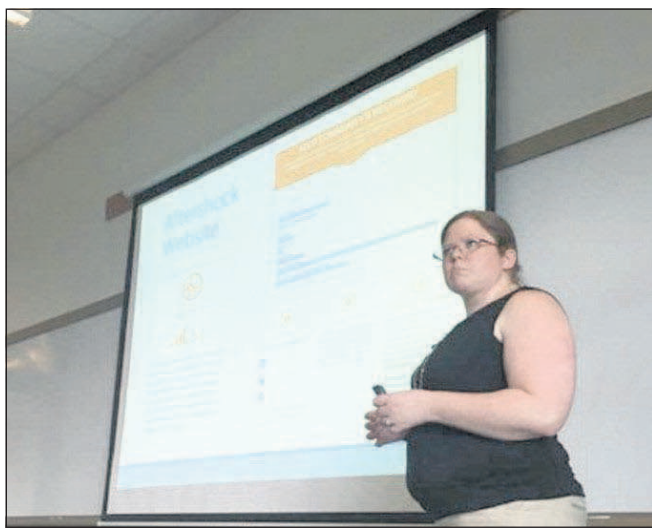
participating in the program, Parmelee said.

"The big thing really is, just open that dialogue. As there's even more talk about Cascadia, the reality is more people are aware of it so our visitors to our coast are going to say, 'Do you guys know what to do?'" Parmelee said.

## Preparing hotels

The roughly 600-mile long Cascadia Subduction Zone runs from British Columbia down to Northern California, and lies about 70 to 100 miles off the Oregon coast. The zone is capable of producing large-magnitude earthquakes — possibly more than a magnitude 9.0 — and the shaking from those earthquakes could produce a tsunami similar to the one that hit the coast of Japan in 2011. There is a 37 percent chance that a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake will occur in the next 50 years, according to the presentation.

The presentation included advice for hospitality business owners and staff on how to communicate necessary information to their guests about what to do and where to go if



CYNTHIA WASHICKO/EO MEDIA GROUP

**Karen Parmelee, a GeoHazards Awareness Coordinator with the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, presents information on the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and the hazards that could result from it.**

an earthquake were to occur during their stay.

Options to convey that information to guests included using avenues like printed key cards or fliers in hotel lobbies and rooms with evacuation maps and other information.

In Seaside, upward of 10 hotels have opted to use sleeves for key cards printed with information and graphics detailing what to do during and after an earthquake, Rahl said. The city originally printed 52,000 of the sleeves, and has distributed more than 30,000 of them to local hotels so far, he said.

## Confident employees

Ensuring hospitality employees are confident in their knowledge of how to respond to a natural disaster is key, said Patrick Corcoran, a faculty member with Oregon State University who deals with Coastal Hazards.

"It is definitely about the confidence of the employees, because if the employees aren't comfortable talking about it, that fear is going to eke out into the guests as well," Parmelee said.

Spence Barker, a chauffeur with the Cannery Pier said that he and some other employees were heading to the hotel after the meeting to walk the path they would take if they needed to evacuate after an earthquake. Barker added that he and his fellow employees were trying to determine how long it would take to get to high ground, and what they might have to navigate around if the bridge near the hotel is down.

Don West, general manager at the Cannery Pier hotel and owner of Astoria Crest Hotel, was concerned not only with what should be done directly after the earthquake and tsunami.

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"I'm thinking, we do a great job of getting everybody out of the inundation zone, then what?" West said. "They do have plans, so I need to find out more about it so that we know."

## No reason to fear

The point of making guests aware of the possible hazards of an earthquake and tsunami isn't to scare them, Parmelee said, but to keep them prepared in case a disaster does strike. She added that, of the hotels who have implemented the practices of informing guests of the hazards, very few have reported losing guests as a result.

The Cascadia Subduction

Zone earthquake and subsequent tsunami are just some of the possible natural hazards facing Oregon, Parmelee said, and it's important to discuss the issue without making it a topic of fear.

"If you're in Florida you've got hurricanes instead of earthquakes, you've got sinkholes instead of landslides," Parmelee said. "Really this is just facing one of our hazards that we have to plan for that we haven't really tackled planning for because the magnitude of it is really just becoming better understood."

More information on what to do in the event of a tsunami is available at [oregontsunami.org](http://oregontsunami.org).

## SEASIDE Signal

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