



TRAINING TO ADDRESS NATURAL DISASTER STRATEGIES

The tsunami alerts that have only recently hit Fiji have provided a wake-up call for Government and for the people of Fiji. We urgently need to have more awareness and training for public servants in order to better prepare for this somewhat new category of natural disasters. These are the comments of the Permanent Secretary, Public Service, Mr Parmesh Chand. According to Mr Chand, the Commission will now give immediate attention to the training of civil servants, who will subsequently be fully capable of providing the most appropriate advice, on the most effective interventions that need to be implemented during such calamities.

For this reason, the Public Service Commission has facilitated the attendance of an officer from the Department of Mineral Resources at the First Meeting of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Task Team in Vanuatu. For the same reason, PSC has also approved the participation of an official from the Ministry of Health, at the Asia Pacific Emergency and Disaster Nursing Network Meeting in Australia.

Furthermore, Mr Chand emphasized that during natural disasters, young children are usually the most vulnerable, and given the fact that many schools are located on low-lying coastal areas, we will definitely need to explore proactive measures to ensure that the safety and security of our children is not, in any way compromised. For this reason, the Public Service Commission has facilitated the attendance of an Education Officer in a Group Training Course on Safer Schools Against Disasters. The course which spans over one month will be held in Japan.

Apparently the majority of natural disasters occur through changes in weather patterns, and indeed, according to Mr Chand, the civil service needs officers who are highly qualified in meteorological matters. In this regards, a workshop on severe weather situations will be held in Samoa, beginning next week, and Fiji will be represented at that workshop.

Mr Chand stresses that all local and overseas training that will be provided and facilitated by PSC, will be targeted and focused on our local needs and on existing national issues. He goes further to say, that with the approaching hurricane season and with the recent tidal wave scares, we cannot afford to be complacent. On its

part, the Public Service Commission will do all it can to ensure that the civil service has the capacity and the expertise to effectively tackle the ramifications of natural disasters that may come our way.

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