

Waves swamp coastal village

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Wary watch

WAVES that struck Tukavesi in Vanua Levu after the cancellation of the tsunami warning were secondary tsunami waves.

Fiji Meteorology Department director Rajendra Prasad said the prediction time they had issued for when the tsunami was expected to strike Fiji was also a period of low tide.

"Because the expected tsunami waves were predicted to be about 1.3 meters in height, even if it struck it would not have been noticeable because it was low tide then," he said.

Mr Prasad said the waves that affected Tukavesi were incoming secondary waves.

"By the time the waves started to affect Tukavesi, it was high tide. So the waves were already traversing in the waters before it was high tide," he said.

"By the time the tide was high, the tsunami waves coincided with it, therefore making an impact at Tukavesi."

Mr Prasad said even after a tsunami warning was cancelled, secondary waves usually remained in the sea and would only make an impact during high tide, as was the case in Tukavesi.

"So we would advise people to be extra cautious of such activities, especially during high tide," he said.

He said the joint operations center which included the weather office, Mineral Resources Department and National Disaster Management Office were responsible for issuing tsunami warnings to the public.

The tsunami caused by the quake that swept across the Pacific killed several people on a Chilean island and devastated coastal communities near the epicentre, but caused little damage in other countries.

Chilean authorities said more than 700 people died and rescue efforts were continuing.