

## Tuvalu responds well to tsunami alert

By Online Editor

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Families at the evacuation centre

Tuvalu's national disaster response committee was activated early Sunday morning immediately after the first tsunami warning was received from the U.S tsunami warning centre in Honolulu.

The tiny island nation of about 10,000 population woke up to warnings of a possible tidal wave following an 8.8 earthquake in Chile in South America, which generated 9.9 metres of waves.

Tuvalu was among a number of small islands in the Pacific put on tsunami alert.

The Hawaiian weather forecasting centre predicted that tidal waves could be expected around mid morning, from 10-12 pm forcing people to move their families to higher ground.

The Ekalesia o Tuvalu cancelled all its scheduled church service to allow families to move to safety.

When PACNEWS visited the national hospital, the doctor in charge, Dr Stephen Homasi was calm as he directed patients and people to the top floor of the hospital. "We inform the patients in the calmest way of the tsunami and explained to them that we need to move them upstairs.

We moved our 23 patients to the conference room and families from surrounding areas. The hospital is a designated evacuation centre, said Dr Homasi.

He told PACNEWS he was pleased with the quick turn-around time for people to mobilise and move to designated higher grounds.

"We had families coming with their water and food and other essential belongings, said Dr Homasi.

The island's lone police vehicle fitted with a loud speaker warned people of the impending huge waves, warning people to move any higher building for their safety. Both the police and navy and government agencies including Red Cross was mobilised to assist with moving families.

Most families with young children were moved to the Taiwanese built two storey government and the Princess Margaret hospital.

"It's good to see that people have now taken heed of our warning and taken precautions. This is probably because people have seen the devastation in Samoa last year, said a Tuvaluan police officer that did not want to be named.

The tsunami alert comes on the day Tuvalu expects its highest king tide. The local

weather office predicts its highest king tide for this year will on Sunday afternoon, around 5pm, peaking at 3.3 metres.  
For the first time, the island has organised a King Tide Festival to promote tourism and create awareness of the impact of climate change on the tiny atoll island.

SOURCE: PACNEWS