

Tsunami Preparedness: Is Zero Casualties Possible?

*Eddie N. Bernard¹

1. Survival Capsule, LLC

An important element of tsunami preparedness is the method to evacuate people from the flooding dangers of tsunamis before the tsunami arrives. The most common evacuation method is horizontal evacuation where threatened people escape to a safe area outside the tsunami hazard zone aided by well marked evacuation routes. In situations where there is insufficient time to evacuate to a safe area, some communities have established vertical evacuation procedures where evacuees seek shelter in structures that allow evacuees to rise above the flooding depth of the tsunami. These structures take several forms, including reinforced concrete building, specialized evacuation towers, or high elevation topography. Horizontal and vertical evacuation methods were put to the test during the 2011 Japanese tsunami. In general, these two methods saved about 95% of the threatened population. In order to achieve the goal of “Zero Casualties”, a third method of shelter in place option will be presented that will save the lives of people who are unable (i.e. elderly, disabled, small children) or unwilling (i.e. don’t trust the warnings, don’t want to go to an evacuation shelter with many people) to evacuate either horizontally or vertically. The shelter in place option takes the form of a survival capsule, a metal protective shell exclusively designed to survive the hostile tsunami environment.

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