

FEMA Approves \$2.5 Million for Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe Tsunami Vertical Evacuation Tower

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BOTHELL, Wash. – The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe will receive \$2.2 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for construction of a vertical evacuation shelter for protecting the population from tsunamis. That amount represents the 90 percent federal share of a total project cost of over \$2.5 million.

The award is part of FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program which provides resources to assist states, tribal governments, territories and local communities in their efforts to implement a sustained pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program.

“The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program is a powerful tool for communities facing threats from tsunamis,” FEMA Regional Administrator Mike O’Hare said. “The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe’s investment in a Vertical Evacuation Tower means that people will have someplace safe to go within minutes of a catastrophic Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.”

The area is near the offshore fault line and has high risks to seismic and tsunami hazards, with only 22 minutes warning time following a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. The structure will be built adjacent to Tribal housing on a peninsula in the small community of Tokeland, Wash. The safe refuge platforms will be built above the predicted tsunami wave crest height. With a total useable area of 3,400 square feet, it will accommodate the 386 people. The proposed site will provide a safe evacuation place for not just Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribal members, but also residents in the surrounding community.

A model of the interior structure of a four-story building with foundational pylons that go down to



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“The tribe considers itself to be a good neighbor, and we know that resources are scarce in the area, so we make sure that the surrounding community members are always included and informed of impending Emergency Management issues,” Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe Emergency Manager Lee Shipman said. “We feel strongly that we are all in this together.”

The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe has been looking into a new, tsunami-safe structure since a study spearheaded by the Washington Emergency Management Division found a dire need for the structures up and down the coast. The Project Safe Haven report was released following the devastating Japanese tsunami in 2011, where thousands of lives were saved because of tsunami vertical evacuation structures.

The project is designed in conformance with the 2012 FEMA P-646 Guidelines for Design of Structures for Vertical Evacuation from Tsunamis. This award is pursuant to Section 203 of the Stafford Act. For more information on the funding program visit FEMA’s PDM website at www.fema.gov/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-program.

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