

OpenVoiceNews U.S.

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Crescent City Sees Highest Tsunami Waves in Mainland U.S. After Russian Earthquake

August 1, 2025

– Categories: Breaking News



Crescent City, California, a small coastal community with a population of roughly 6,600, recorded waves up to 4 feet (1.22 meters) after a massive offshore earthquake near Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula early Wednesday morning. While the tsunami prompted alerts across the Pacific region, Crescent City experienced the most significant wave action in the continental United States. Fortunately, the impact was limited, and residents resumed normal routines shortly after.

Despite its history as one of the country's most tsunami-prone locations, earning the nickname "tsunami magnet," the city avoided widespread damage. Local officials confirmed that while one dock at the harbor was submerged after being dislodged by surging water around 2:40 a.m., no injuries or major flooding occurred. The dock, built to absorb wave energy before it enters the inner harbor, reportedly functioned as intended, according to Crescent City Harbormaster Mike Rademaker.

Evacuation orders were issued as a precaution, though many residents and visitors returned soon after realizing conditions had stabilized. "A lot of people who aren't from here did evacuate. But they ended up coming right back because nothing happened," said Rose Renee, an employee at Oceanfront Lodge.

Crescent City's vulnerability to tsunamis stems from its proximity to the Mendocino Fracture Zone, an underwater ridge that intensifies incoming wave energy. Since 1933, 41 tsunami events have been recorded in the city. Historical records, including oral histories from Indigenous communities, geological data, and written accounts from across the Pacific Rim, point to centuries of tsunami activity along the Del Norte County coastline.

The most devastating incident occurred in 1964, when a 9.2 magnitude earthquake in Alaska triggered a tsunami that claimed 11 lives in Crescent City and destroyed 29 city blocks. That event remains the deadliest tsunami disaster in U.S. history, with 124 total deaths reported across Alaska, California, and Oregon, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

More recently, in 2011, a tsunami generated by the Tōhoku earthquake in Japan killed one person in Crescent City and caused significant harbor damage.

Tsunami preparedness remains a priority in the area. Max Blair, a volunteer with the Del Norte Historical Society, noted that residents participate in annual tsunami drills, and the city has systems in place to issue immediate alerts, including sirens and cellphone notifications. Evacuation routes are well-known locally, with higher ground, such as the local Walmart parking lot located 2 miles inland, serving as the primary safe zone.

Blair emphasized that residents take potential tsunami threats seriously: "We evacuate if it's forecast to be a big wave. But the first wave was coming in at low tide, and it was only a couple of feet, so we just had to stay away from the beach."

As of Wednesday afternoon, officials continued to urge caution. James White, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Eureka, California, warned of strong tidal fluctuations that could produce dangerous currents along the coast. City Manager Eric Weir echoed the concern, stating, “It seems like whenever we have these events, it’s also time that we lose someone just because they’re in the wrong place and they get caught off-guard.”

Though conditions have improved, local authorities reiterated that the coastline may remain hazardous for those venturing too close to the surf. Crescent City’s official guidance remains clear: tsunamis can strike at any time, and residents should be prepared to move to higher ground immediately if alerts are issued.