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## Pacific Coast Evacuees Return Home as Tsunami Warnings Lifted Following Major Earthquake

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July 31, 2025

– Categories: *Breaking News*



Millions of people across the Pacific have been allowed to return home after tsunami warnings were lifted in the wake of a powerful earthquake off the eastern coast of Russia. The 8.8-magnitude tremor, which struck near the Kamchatka Peninsula on Tuesday, initially triggered widespread concerns of a potentially devastating tsunami. However, while the event prompted precautionary evacuations in multiple countries, reported damage and casualties were minimal.

Authorities across more than a dozen Pacific nations issued emergency alerts following the earthquake, advising residents in coastal areas to evacuate or seek higher ground.

Countries affected included Japan, the United States, Peru, Ecuador, and others.

Predicted wave surges of up to four metres prompted emergency measures such as port closures and flight cancellations. Peru temporarily shut down 65 of its 121 Pacific ports, and flights were halted to and from the Hawaiian island of Maui.

In Japan, nearly two million residents were ordered to evacuate, including staff at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, which suffered a major disaster in 2011 due to a similar event. The tsunami warnings in Japan were later downgraded or cancelled. Tragically, the only reported fatality occurred in Japan, where a woman died after driving her vehicle off a cliff in an attempt to flee the area, according to local media.

Chile conducted what was described as one of its largest evacuations to date, with 1.4 million people directed to safer ground. Despite the scale of the response, no injuries or significant damage were reported, with coastal wave activity measuring only around 60 centimetres.

In Ecuador's Galápagos Islands, wave heights were expected to reach up to three metres. The Ecuadoran Navy's oceanographic institute later confirmed that the danger had subsided. Local reports described a typical tsunami pattern where the sea level initially dropped before returning, but only a minor surge of just over one metre occurred, causing no destruction. Businesses, including restaurants and tourist venues, resumed operations shortly after.

Russia experienced the most visible effects, particularly in the town of Severo-Kurilsk, where a tsunami wave flooded the port area and damaged a local fish processing facility. State television footage showed buildings and debris being swept into the ocean. The water reached the town's World War II memorial, located approximately 400 metres from the coast. According to Mayor Alexander Ovsyannikov, the impact was significant but local authorities responded promptly.

Though the quake was among the strongest recorded globally since 1900, its impact on human life and infrastructure remained limited. Russian scientists also reported that the Klyuchevskoy volcano erupted shortly after the quake, with visible lava flows and explosions observed on the western slope.

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) stated that the event ranks among the ten most powerful earthquakes recorded globally in the past century. A series of aftershocks followed the initial tremor, including one measured at magnitude 6.9. The regional seismic monitoring agency warned of further aftershocks reaching up to 7.5 magnitude in

the coming days. The USGS estimated a 59 percent chance of an aftershock above magnitude 7.0 within the next week.

Despite the size of the earthquake, early warning systems and coordinated evacuations across the Pacific appear to have significantly mitigated the potential for widespread loss of life or catastrophic damage.