Japanese Tsunami Debris on California’s North Coast

The March 11, 2011 tsunami that hit Japan produced five million tons of debris. While most of the debris stayed near Japan, over a million tons were caught in the Pacific Ocean currents and pushed by winds towards North America. The first verified California debris, a boat from a Japanese High School, arrived in Del Norte County in April 2013. Debris is likely to continue to arrive for a number of years.

**Japanese Tsunami Debris** is no different than any other debris you may find on the beach. The tsunami debris is very dispersed and it is not likely to arrive in large concentrations.

**Hazardous. Call 911 to contact law enforcement agencies**

*Be Safe.* Use common sense. If you think the debris may be hazardous (oil or chemical drums, gas cans, propane tanks) or poses a risk to health and safety, contact law enforcement immediately.

**Not Hazardous**

Post your observations at disasterdebris@noaa.gov or leave a message at the Humboldt Earthquake Education Center 707 826-6019.

**A Bigger Problem – The Northern Pacific Garbage Dump**

Debris from the Japan tsunami highlights the much bigger and longer-term problem of debris from human activities in the world’s oceans. The vast majority of the debris will not be from the tsunami. Find out more about global marine debris at www.marinedebris.noaa.gov and tsunami debris at disasterdebris.wordpress.com

**Is It Radioactive?**

Not Likely. Debris from the Japan tsunami is no more likely to be radioactive than debris from any other source. The nuclear releases did not occur until long after the debris was washed offshore. No debris found outside of Japan’s Fukushima coast has shown radioactivity.

**What about Invasive Species?**

A few of the large objects that have washed up on the West Coast have had invasive marine animals and plants that could harm our local marine ecosystems.

**Who Handles the Cleanup?**

Local agencies will deal with the debris. If a situation arises that is beyond the ability of local authorities to handle, assistance will be requested from the State.

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GUIDELINES BY DEBRIS TYPE

**Litter and Other Typical Marine Debris**

Remove debris such as plastic bottles, aluminum cans, Styrofoam, buoys and other litter from the beach. Recycle or dispose of in a trashcan.

**Debris with Marine Life**

If debris is covered in marine life, record the location, collect or move above the high tide line if possible. **Do not put the debris back into the ocean!**

**Large Debris or Derelict Vessel**

If you find a boat, shipping container, dock or other large debris, record the location, note whether it is covered in marine life, and photograph if possible. **Contact law enforcement as soon as you can.**

**Mementos or Personal Possessions**

If you find a memento or possession with unique identifiers, names, or markings, record the location and collect the item if practical. It might be possible to trace it back to an individual or group. **Notify law enforcement.** Report finding to: disasterdebris@noaa.gov

**Hazardous Debris or Suspicious Item**

If an item is suspicious or appears hazardous, don’t touch it. Record the location, describe accurately, and **immediately contact law enforcement.**