

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 Pays for the Cleanup?

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

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.



This information has been prepared by the Redwood Coast Tsunami Work Group and is based on information from NOAA, the U.S. Coast Guard and the State of California. Recommended actions may be updated as more is learned about the debris. Visit www.humboldt.edu/rctwg for more information. 6/15/2013