

Report to Congress

**The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's
Report on Requiring the TsunamiReady® Program to be Accredited by the Emergency
Management Accreditation Program**

**For the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives
as Requested in Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017**

April 2018

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) prepared this report in response to the following direction provided by the *Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017* (PL 115-25), which cites that:

“...the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall submit to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives a report on which authorities and activities would be needed to have the TsunamiReady program of the National Weather Service accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program.”

Executive Summary

The Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) is an independent, non-profit organization that oversees a very specific program through which all-hazard emergency management programs are accredited. The National Weather Service (NWS) TsunamiReady[®] program is not a comprehensive emergency management program and is intended to be a voluntary community recognition program that promotes tsunami hazard preparedness as an active collaboration among local, state, territorial, tribal and federal emergency management agencies, community leaders, and the public. In order for the NWS to administer an EMAP program, considerable additional staff and resources would be required. NWS is neither authorized nor appropriated to conduct the EMAP activity. The comprehensive EMAP process addressing prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery is well beyond the scope of the NWS mission and would require new legislative authority for NWS to spend funds to administer a TsunamiReady[®] EMAP, and would conflict and overlap with other federal agency (Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)) authority, and local government responsibility. NOAA stands ready to work with Congress, FEMA, and EMAP to address any concerns with NOAA's TsunamiReady[®] program.

Section I: Emergency Management Accreditation Program Overview

FEMA defines a comprehensive emergency management program as:

“The preparation for and the carrying out of all emergency functions necessary to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters caused by all hazards, whether natural, technological, or human caused.” (Source: FEMA *Principles of Emergency Management*, September 2007)

EMAP is an independent non-profit organization that oversees the *ANSI/EMAP 4-2016 Emergency Management Standard*¹ through which emergency management programs are voluntarily accredited. It defines an emergency management program as a *jurisdiction-wide system* that provides for management and coordination of the five mandatory elements of an Emergency Management Program: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities for all hazards. The system encompasses all organizations, agencies, departments, entities, and individuals responsible for emergency management and homeland security for that jurisdiction.

EMAP further notes that:

“Emergency Management Accreditation is a means of demonstrating, through self-assessment, documentation and peer review, that a program meets national standards for emergency management programs.” (Source: EMAP website <http://www.emap.org>)

The ANSI/EMAP 4-2016 Emergency Management Standard by EMAP is the set of 64 standards by which programs that apply for EMAP accreditation are evaluated. The Emergency Management Standard is designed as a tool for continuous improvement as part of the voluntary accreditation process for local, state, federal, higher education and tribal emergency management programs.¹

The Emergency Management Standard covers:

- Program Management, Administration and Finance, and Laws and Authorities
- Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Consequence Analysis
- Hazard Mitigation
- Prevention
- Operational Planning and Procedures
- Incident Management
- Resource Management, Mutual Aid and Logistics
- Communications and Warning
- Facilities
- Training
- Exercises, Evaluations and Corrective Action
- Emergency Public Education and Information

Section II: National Weather Service TsunamiReady® Program Overview

NOAA’s NWS established the voluntary TsunamiReady® recognition program in 2001. Modeled on the NWS's successful StormReady® program, TsunamiReady® helps communities

¹ Emergency Management Standard: <http://www.emap.org/index.php/root/about-emap/96-emap-em-4-2016/file>

minimize the threat posed by tsunamis through better risk assessment, planning, education, and warning communications.

TsunamiReady[®] is a voluntary community recognition program that promotes tsunami hazard preparedness as an active collaboration among federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local emergency management agencies, community leaders, and the public. The primary goal of the program is to improve public safety before, during, and after tsunami emergencies by establishing guidelines to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to tsunamis.

As of December 22, 2017, 198 communities in the United States have been recognized by affirming that they have voluntarily met *TsunamiReady[®] Guidelines*. The voluntary compliance element of this program has played a significant role in making the program successful.

Section III: EMAP Accreditation of TsunamiReady[®]

Both EMAP and TsunamiReady[®] work with local government and Tribal jurisdictions, and encompass similar tenets of preparedness and mitigation. However, each is unique and they are independent efforts. While EMAP is an all-encompassing accreditation achieved through industry standards, TsunamiReady[®] is a recognition program focused on preparing for a specific natural hazard - tsunamis. The NWS TsunamiReady[®] Program does not qualify as a stand-alone “Emergency Management Program” because it does not contain all actions required for the five mandatory elements for such a program as identified by EMAP (prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery), nor does it address all hazards or include all local organizations.

Upon review by EMAP leadership,² the NWS TsunamiReady[®] Program is considered to be a “project” and not a jurisdiction-wide emergency management system. Based on this determination, NWS TsunamiReady[®] Program cannot be accredited by EMAP as it is currently administered.

In order to qualify to be accredited by EMAP, TsunamiReady[®] would be required to expand extensively to include all hazards and all applicable entities within a jurisdiction. Expansion of this magnitude would create duplication of FEMA and local governments’ missions and supersede the legal authority of local governments to administer their respective emergency management programs. NOAA is not an emergency management agency, and such management and coordination falls outside the scope of its mission. Additionally, the standards outlined in Section I are well beyond the TsunamiReady[®] project’s legal authorization and administrative

² See enclosure 1 - EMAP Cmte Chair Letter to NWS of July 13 2017

scope. Specifically, expansion of the TsunamiReady® Program to meet these standards for EMAP accreditation would require:

- Having a component of the NWS develop a system that provides for management and coordination of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities for all hazards. The TsunamiReady® Program is, by definition, limited to tsunami hazards only.
- NOAA/NWS hiring sufficient full-time staff to administer a complete emergency management program that would address hazard risk, mitigation, outreach and education, training, exercises, and response for hazards more than tsunami.
- Changing the voluntary nature of community recognition for tsunami preparedness, mitigation, outreach, and communication protocols as shown in the *TsunamiReady® Guidelines*³ to a mandatory, standards-based program. This would require local governments to comply with all aspects that the ANSI/EMAP 4-2016 Standard requires.
- NOAA/NWS assuming all funding aspects of TsunamiReady® recognition, including acquisition and placement of signage, evaluation, and placement of warning infrastructure, and related local permitting and compliance with state, territory, and county regulations.

Section IV: Recommendation

NOAA/NWS supports EMAP Headquarters' assessment that the voluntary NWS recognition TsunamiReady® Program is neither eligible nor appropriate for consideration for EMAP accreditation. It is recommended that NOAA continue to administer the TsunamiReady® program in its current voluntary form.

³ <https://www.weather.gov/tsunamiready/guidelines>