

8.9 quake rocks Japan; West Coast braces for tsunami

Publisher's note: Here is a link to when NOAA forecasts a potential tsunami could hit West Coast cities. Here is an emergency preparedness guide for the South Shore that has relevance to other areas.

By Barbara Demick, David Pierson and Kenji Hall, Los Angeles Times

The worst earthquake in generations struck off the northeast coast of Japan on Friday, setting off a devastating tsunami that swallowed swaths of coastal territory and fanned out across the Pacific Ocean, threatening everything in its path.

The 8.9-magnitude earthquake – the world's fifth-largest since 1900 and the biggest in Japan in 140 years – struck at 2:46 p.m. local time, shaking buildings violently in Tokyo for several minutes and sending millions fleeing for higher ground.

At least 60 people are believed dead, though that number is expected to rise dramatically as officials begin assessing the extent of the damage. Japanese media is reporting scores of people missing, likely buried under rubble or swept away by waves as high as 33 feet.

Nearby islands are bracing for the tsunami and warnings have been issued for 53 countries including ones as far as Colombia and Peru.

At least 80 fires have been reported across the country and large areas are without electricity.

Read the whole story