

Senator Olympia Snowe Questions Absence of Tsunami Warning

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SNOWE QUESTIONS ABSENCE OF TSUNAMI WARNING

Urges Effort to Address Shortcomings to Help Avert Future Disasters

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) today sent a letter to Admiral Lautenbacher, Administrator of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), requesting he explain what specific efforts were made by NOAA to contact potentially affected nations before they were hit by the recent tsunamis. Snowe expressed her deep concern that once NOAA learned of the earthquake off Sumatra, and the possibility of a resulting tsunami, only two countries – participants in the Pacific Ocean Tsunami Warning System – were notified.

“The entire world mourns the terrible and stunning loss caused by these tsunamis,” said Snowe. “We must work to make whatever fundamental changes are necessary to ensure that every last measure of effort and resources are exerted to provide critical information to all those in a position to potentially use that knowledge to avert catastrophe.”

Reportedly, the only two nations in the affected region that were notified were Indonesia and Australia. Nations such as India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives – which are not participants in the Pacific Warning System – apparently were not contacted.

“The fact that the potential danger rose to the level of prompting a swift warning to two nations, while others could be faced with a potentially devastating impact, raises serious questions that require a response and ultimately a solution,” said Snowe. “We must ensure information NOAA receives is quickly disseminated to all countries that could benefit from such critical information.”

“Given this fact, what efforts, if any, were made to contact those other nations in the region that were also in harm’s way? If NOAA did not have the appropriate contacts, as has been

reported, why was this the case? Was an attempt made to obtain that contact information – and if not, why not? These are questions that must be answered.”

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