Hawai`i is vulnerable to several hazards, both natural and human-caused. Some hazards, such as hurricanes, are preceded by a warning period prior to impact and allow time for readiness actions and protective measures. These are often referred to as “notice events.” Other hazards, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, are “no notice” events that occur with little or no warning.

The risk associated with a hazard is based on several factors, the primary ones being the probability of occurrence and the magnitude of potential impacts. The hazards that are most likely to occur with the greatest potential impacts are higher priorities for preparedness and mitigation efforts. For natural hazards, hurricanes and tsunamis have been identified as the top areas of concern. Flooding is the hazard the state experiences most frequently. Cyber incidents and acts of terrorism are deemed the types of manmade incidents that pose the greatest risk for the state.
Tsunamis

Tsunamis are described as ‘distant’ or ‘local’ depending on the originating source. Hawai‘i is at risk of experiencing both types.

Distant Source Tsunamis originate from a faraway source, usually over 600 miles away, with the first wave arriving more than three (3) hours later.

Tsunamis from Local Sources originate from a nearby source, with waves arriving within minutes or within an hour. While destructive local tsunamis are rare, there is little time to react and local tsunamis generally result in more deaths than distant tsunamis.

Weather Advisories

For weather events, the National Weather Service issues outlooks and advisories to provide a heads-up that severe weather is possible. When a watch is issued, it means severe weather is expected. A warning means severe weather is occurring or imminent.

Hurricanes and Tropical Storms

When a hurricane or tropical storm passes the 140° longitude line, which is approximately 5 days prior to potential impacts to the state, increased monitoring and readiness actions are initiated. State Emergency Response Team (SERT) representatives are invited to daily calls with the National Weather Service and the counties to maintain situational awareness and coordinate activities.