



# **House of Assembly Communication**

**The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis**

**Wednesday, 29 January 2020**

**Nassau, Bahamas**

Mr. Speaker:

I thought it appropriate as the substantive minister for the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction that I give a communication to the Honorable House on the earthquake in our region yesterday.

NEMA announced last evening that, “The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre (PTWC) advised that a powerful 7.7

magnitude earthquake occurred 83 miles northwest of Montego Bay, Jamaica at approximately 2:10pm on, Tuesday, January 28, 2020, at the depth of 6 miles which was felt in New Providence around 2:15pm.”

Within the region, the earthquake was felt in the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Haiti, Cuba and The Bahamas.

It was also felt in parts of Miami, Florida in the United States.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey the earthquake hit at 2:10 p.m.

The Survey noted that the epicenter was located in the Caribbean Sea.

According to some reports, “The quake caused strong to severe shaking in northwest Jamaica.”

I wish to note that I spoke with the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, yesterday following the earthquake.

There was also moderate shaking on Grand Cayman Island and the Associated Press reported that some roads cracked in the Cayman Islands.

I note that there are no reports of injuries of Bahamian students in Jamaica and students in Santiago and Manzanillo, in Cuba.

We are still awaiting from Guantanamo in Cuba.

Mr. Speaker:

The Cabinet Office announced that due to tremors felt in buildings on East Bay Street and Shirley Street, in an abundance

of caution, government buildings were closed around 3:00 pm.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, which is a part of the United States National Weather Service (NWS), indicated according to reports that: “tsunami waves between one to three feet were possible for the coasts of Jamaica, Cuba, Cayman Islands, Belize, Honduras and Mexico.”

The NWS subsequently advised that the threat passed.

NEMA and the lead agency, the Bahamas Department of Meteorology will be carefully monitoring any further earthquake advisories and tsunami threat messages from the PTWC and will advise the public accordingly.

Mr. Speaker:



I advise the House that if there is an earthquake-generated tsunami and a threat to the region including The Bahamas, the Pacific Tsunami Watch Centre in Hawaii, issues Tsunami Watch/Information Statement Bulletins to the Bahamas Department of Meteorology, which is the National Tsunami Warning Focal Point.

The Met Department then notifies the

Director of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), who will in turn activate the national response procedures from the Standard of Operating Procedures (SOP).

The Director of NEMA is also responsible for notifying: the Secretary to the Cabinet/Prime Minister, the National Disaster Committee (NDC), Local Government, Family Island Administrators and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency

Management Agency (CDEMA).

The Model Tsunami Warning Protocol demonstrates the process by which information concerning a tsunami event is gathered, analyzed and disseminated.

The vulnerable communities are notified and alerted via NEMA's communication arm and other channels including the local media.

In recent years NEMA has been involved in Caribbean Tsunami Exercises, which evaluated the national protocol, local tsunami response plans, increased tsunami preparedness and improve coordination throughout the region.

Protocols will continue to be monitored and adjusted as necessary.

Going forward, our building codes may also have to take into consideration the

impact of the effects of earthquakes in the region.

I will communicate to the House and to the Bahamian people any additional information as events warrant.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.