

Jamaica's National Tsunami Readiness Exercise Takes Centre Stage on March 19

On March 19, 2026, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) will conduct Jamaica's National Tsunami Readiness Exercise as part of the regional Caribe Wave 2026 tsunami exercise.

Caribe Wave is an annual regional tsunami preparedness exercise held across the Caribbean and neighbouring territories to test tsunami warning systems and strengthen community readiness. The exercise began in 2011 and is coordinated by the **UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** through the **Caribbean Tsunami Warning System (CARIBE-EWS)**.

Each year, more than 40 countries and territories across the Caribbean and adjacent regions participate in the exercise. Governments, emergency services, schools, businesses, and coastal communities use this opportunity to practise their response to a tsunami warning and improve coordination during an emergency.

Although tsunamis are relatively rare in the Caribbean, historical records confirm that they can occur and cause significant damage. More than 65 tsunamis have been documented in the Caribbean over the past 500 years, resulting in thousands of fatalities and widespread destruction in some areas.

The Caribe Wave exercise allows participating countries to test communication systems, warning procedures, and evacuation plans, while also increasing public awareness about tsunami hazards and safety measures.

Jamaica participates annually through ODPEM to strengthen national preparedness and ensure that coastal communities understand how to respond quickly and safely to a tsunami threat.

For Caribe Wave 2026, activities will take place islandwide, with Port Maria in the parish of St. Mary serving as the primary location for the national exercise. Selected communities in the parish will participate in evacuation drills and other preparedness activities.

The exercise will include:

- Nationwide observation of the exercise across all parishes
- Testing of communications to the National Tsunami Contact List
- Activation of tsunami warning procedures
- Public awareness and preparedness activities
- Community evacuation drills in Port Maria and surrounding communities

These activities will help residents, emergency responders, and national agencies to practise moving quickly to safer locations and responding effectively if a tsunami warning is issued.

The ODPEM encourages schools, businesses, and coastal communities across Jamaica to participate in the exercise and utilise the opportunity to review their emergency procedures and enhance preparedness for tsunami hazards.