



25 August 2025



Reference: OIA-2025/26-0062

Dear 

Official Information Act request relating to the emergency alert sent out on 31 July

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 31 July 2025. You requested:

“My request concerns the 6.30am emergency alert sent out on Thursday morning (July 31) concerning a possible tsunami threat and a glitch in the alert system. My request is as follows.

- 1. What was the justification for this 6.30am alert? Why did NEMA decide a morning alert needed to be sent?*
- 2. How did this emergency meet the threshold for sending emergency alerts, considering it does not pose a land-based threat but the examples on Get Ready say the alert will be used in cases where there is a “tsunami affecting land areas”?*
- 3. Was there a precedent for this?*
- 4. How involved was the minister in making this decision? Did he make the decision, if not who did?*
- 5. What caused the glitch that caused some people to receive multiple alerts and others none?”*

For clarity, I have numbered the parts of your request.

Regarding your questions as to why the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) issued a National Advisory and sent an Emergency Mobile Alert, in emergency management, NEMA has a statutory responsibility to alert the public to tsunami risk. Every decision to alert the public is based on best advice available including scientific evidence, international best practice, the observable conditions, and the life safety risks.

When NEMA received notification that a powerful earthquake had occurred and generated tsunami waves that were travelling across the Pacific, it was a straightforward decision to alert people to help them stay safe.

Based on advice from Earth Sciences NZ that tsunami activity would arrive at our shores around midnight on Wednesday evening (30 July), NEMA issued a National Advisory and sent an Emergency Mobile Alert. As always, we carefully selected who should receive it - in this case, the alert was only sent to phones connected to a mobile tower near the coastline. The first alert was sent at 4.13pm as it was critical to issue it before nightfall, because many people live on boats, or plan ahead for early fishing trips or a dawn surf.

Overnight, we received confirmation that tsunami activity was impacting New Zealand's coastline and would continue to do so well into Thursday (31 July). We weighed up the risks and concluded that we needed to inform the public that the threat was present and ongoing. We sent the alert at 6.30am to ensure we did not wake large numbers of people up in the middle of the night, while informing those planning morning activities in beach or marine areas while dangerous tsunami activity was happening.

Information on the M8.8 Kamchatka Russia earthquake and tsunami prepared by GeoNet is available on the following website:

<https://www.geonet.org.nz/news/4O1zMlf5rXqq8mFCJOfcEq>

More information on civil defence emergency management alerts and warnings are available on the following website:

<https://www.civildefence.govt.nz/get-ready/civil-defence-emergency-management-alerts-and-warnings>

Regarding whether there is a precedent for issuing alerts for tsunami activity, the answer is yes – alerts have previously been used for tsunami activity affecting beach and marine areas. The examples on the Get Ready website are not intended to be exhaustive.

I can confirm that the Minister for Emergency Management and Recovery (Hon Mark Mitchell) was not involved in making the decision to send out an Emergency Mobile Alert (EMA) at 6.30am on 31 July 2025. I am withholding the name and position of the NEMA staff member who made the decision to send out an EMA at 6.30am on 31 July 2025 under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the Act, to protect them from improper pressure or harassment. I have considered the public interest in the release of this information and determined no such interest exists that would outweigh the reasons for withholding this information.

Regarding the frequency of the alerts, we acknowledge that some people's phones sounded multiple alerts in the middle of the night, even though NEMA had only issued two alerts. NEMA never issues duplicate alerts – any subsequent alerts need to have new information or advice, as was the case here. Further information on the duplication of alerts can be found on the following website: [NEMA identifies what caused emergency alert issues during Kamchatka tsunami event » National Emergency Management Agency](#)

If you have any further questions relating to this request, please contact our Manager Communications Anthony Frith – anthony.frith@nema.govt.nz.

This response will be published on the DPMC website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Holland
**Chief Advisor to the Chief Executive
National Emergency Management Agency**