Sign up to have emergency notifications on your cell phone

Like many of you, I woke up this morning and monitored the news to find out how the tsunami generated by the 8.9 magnitude earthquake in Japan (one of the largest earthquakes ever recorded) would affect us on the West Coast. Since I live on the Richmond shoreline, I was especially concerned whether a tsunami would come ashore near where I live.

Since I live near the Bay, I received phone calls from the County's emergency notification system on both my cell and home phones around 7:30 a.m. informing me that there would not be any major impact in Contra Costa County.

If I had not signed up to receive emergency notifications on my cell phone, I only would have received a call on my home phone. I know that many people want to receive emergency alerts on their cell phone. However, current available technology only allows the County's emergency notification system to automatically call telephone landlines using a reverse 911 directory.

If you live in Contra Costa County and want to receive emergency notifications and alerts on your cell phone (like me), you can sign up for this free service by going to the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office website at www.cws.cccounty.us and follow the instructions.

Good information on emergency preparedness is available on the Contra Costa Health Services website at www.cchealth.org/topics/emergencies.

My website at www.cocobos.org/gioia also has useful information on how you can become better prepared for emergencies.

Finally, our hearts and sympathies go out to the people in Japan who have been impacted by the devastating earthquake and tsunami. We extend our support to them as they recover from this terrible disaster.

John Gíoía

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