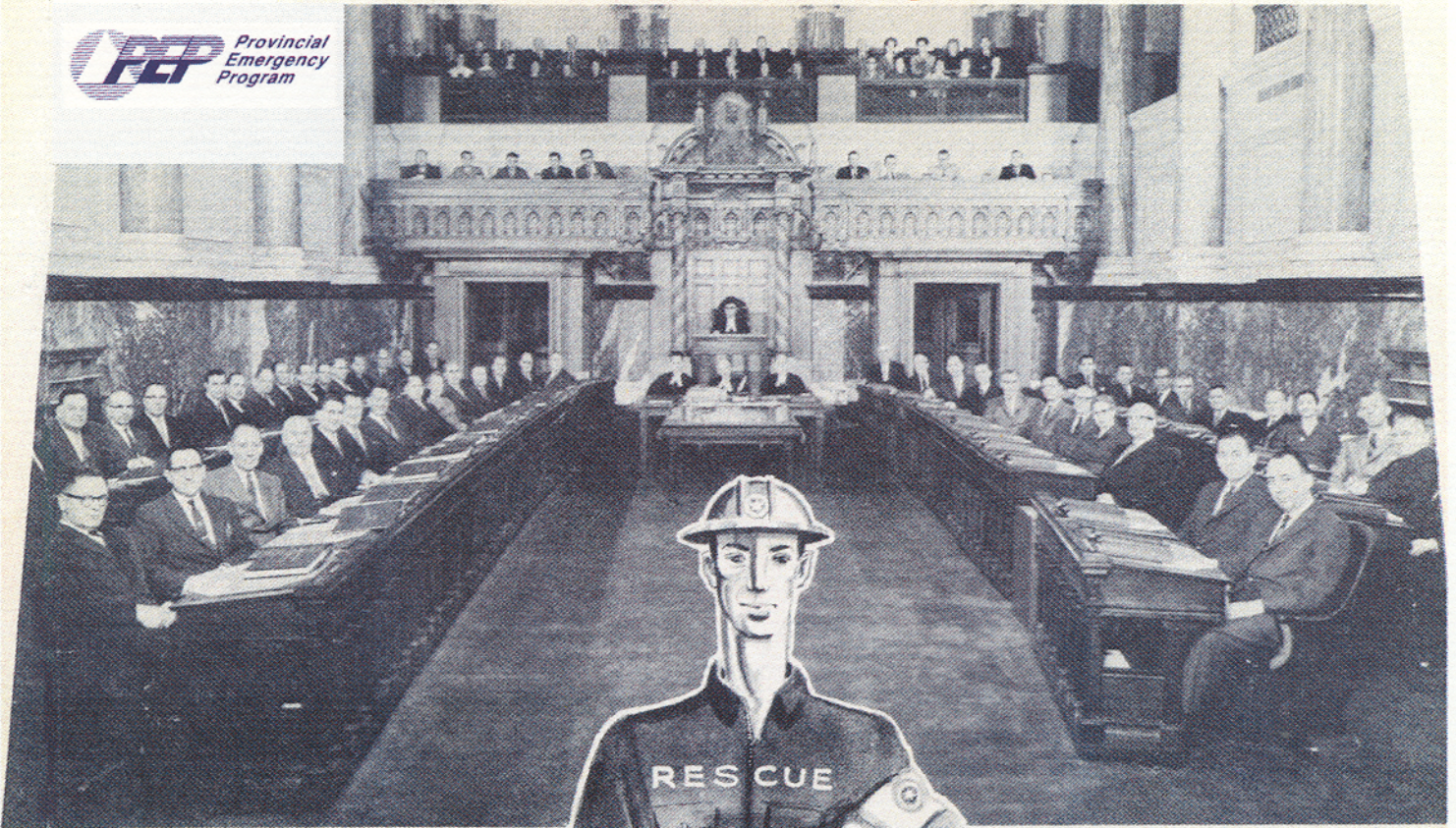


SUMMER EDITION



BRITISH COLUMBIA

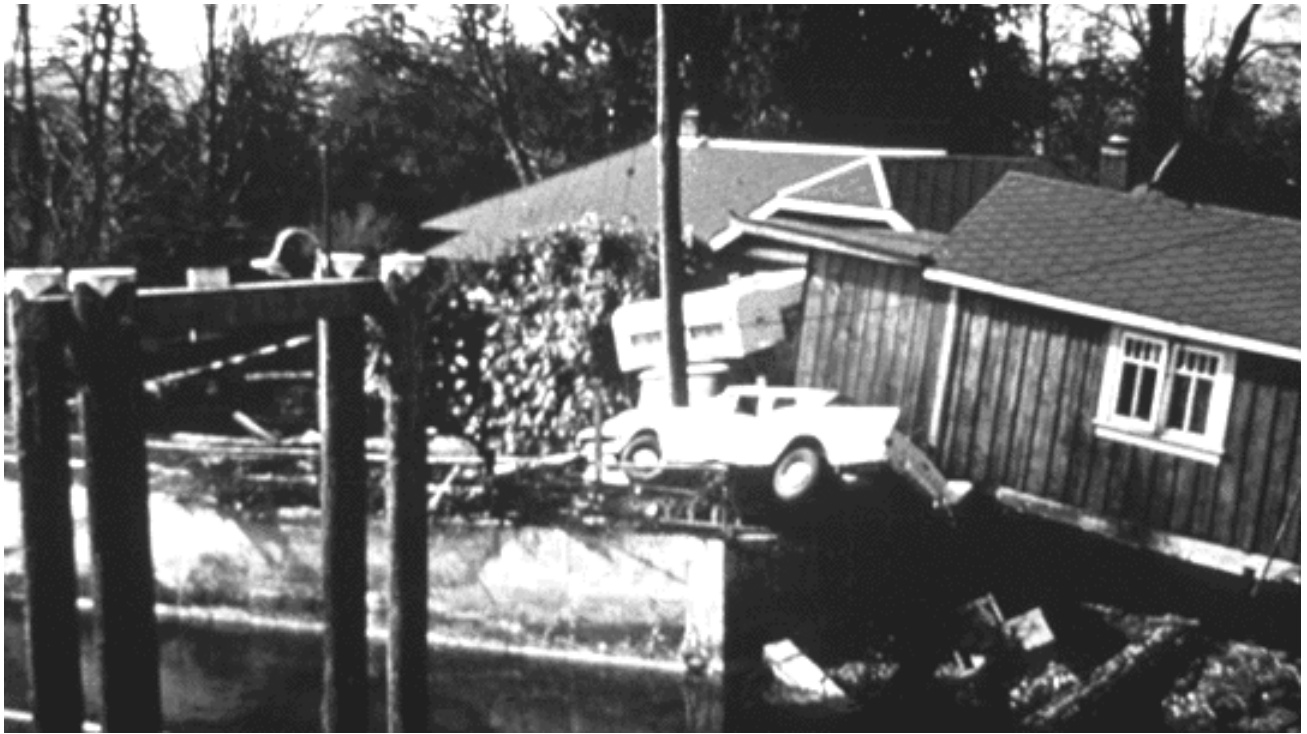
CIVIL DEFENCE CIRCULAR

CIVIL DEFENCE IS GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR SURVIVAL



CIVIL DEFENCE CO-ORDINATOR'S OFFICE - DEPARTMENT OF THE PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

SPECIAL REPORT ON ALBERNI TIDAL WAVE DISASTER



T I D A L W A V E !



The foggy dawn of Saturday, March 28, 1964, broke on a stunned and unbelieving populace in the Alberni Valley. Residents were stunned by the small glimpse they'd already had of the fantastic damage done to their communities... unbelieving at the reports that no one had been drowned or even seriously injured in the tidal wave which swept the low-lying areas in the midnight hours following the great Alaska earthquake.

Other communities up and down the west coast of North America felt in varying degrees the effects of the tidal waves which followed the northern upheaval. But the length and shape of the same Alberni Inlet which cleaves 35 miles through the heart of Vancouver Island on British Columbia's coast, and which is the very reason for the existence of the twin cities of Alberni and Port Alberni, also ordained that they should suffer greatly from the tidal wave.

Along most sections of the coast the first eight-foot wave rolled past almost unnoticed.

But in the narrowing confines of Alberni Inlet, the water was forced to pile up, and the first wave equalled the worst flooding conditions ever recorded here. The second was several feet high and rolled in with more force.

Where the first wave served to alert the communities just enough to prevent loss of life, the second marched inland to carry off homes, automobiles



and the pathetic personal remainders strewn about by any disaster. The waterfront industries (plywood, lumber, pulp and paper) on which the towns depend for their livelihood were knocked out; businesses in the lower areas were swamped.

The period of grace between the first wave and the disastrous second was not long enough to get everyone moving toward safety... many were caught in their homes. The fast-rising waters knocked out all power and street lighting, so that many waded chest-deep, in the sudden dark, through their yards to safety.

For visitors staying in some of the auto courts near the river, there was the added complication of finding their way over strange ground... yet all made it to higher areas.

Even more miraculous were some of the hair-breadth escapes of children. One man dashed out to save his brand-new convertible only to find a pair of youngsters floating by on a log; he too was chest deep before the trio made it to dry ground. A civil defence worker rowing around in the dark checking houses flashed his light into one, and rescued a baby floating on a mattress.

The tales of close escapes are endless, and days later people who witnessed the tidal flood still found it hard to believe there'd been no casualties.



But as time went by after the waters had receded the tally of damage went up and up. Some 58 properties ... individual homes, stores and multiple auto courts ... were assessed as 100% losses.

Hotels, motels, stores, car lots, warehouses and service stations all suffered staggering losses in stock and furnishings.



HELP HAS ARRIVED

Provincial Civil Defence personnel, 200 Army personnel under Col. Matthews, Social Welfare re-enforcements under direction of Miss Margaret Jamieson are among those who have rallied to the aid of the district.

By tonight there will be 65 R.C.M.P. men, with nine cars and two boats in the area to help preserve law and order during the rehabilitation period.

Even the National Employment Service has brought in reenforcements. A representative of the B.C. region told the disaster committee that extra staff has been added at the local office and all possible red tape will be cut in order that funds will be available for persons whose jobs have been temporarily lost on account of the flood.

Fred Sommerville, Victoria Zone C.D. Co-ordinator, complimented local authorities on the extent of their co-ordination which had been carried on in spite of the fact that measures had not yet been completed to set up the organization in Port Alberni and that district co-ordinator Ben Thurston is ill.

Les Hughes, acting co-ordinator, was thanked by Mayor Fred Bishop for services rendered without previous formal training.



REPORT ON THE ALBERNI TIDAL WAVE DISASTER

1. At 7:00 A. M. on March 28th, 1964 Provincial Civil Defence was alerted in connection with damage caused by a tidal wave in Alberni and Port Alberni.
2. The Assistant Civil Defence Co-ordinator, Mr. John H. Erb, was checking the news broadcasts for further information about the earthquake and tidal wave at this time. Immediately on hearing about the tidal wave reaching the Alberni Valley he contacted Zone Co-ordinator, Mr. J.D. Somerville, to alert him and see whether or not he had any information about the disaster and instructed him to immediately contact Alberni and Port Alberni for information and offer Civil Defence assistance.
3. The Provincial Secretary, The Honourable W.D. Black, and the Deputy Provincial Secretary, Mr. L.J. Wallace, were informed by telephone of the disaster in Alberni and that Civil Defence Services were being activated.
4. The Director of Emergency Welfare Services, A.G. Gilmore, was aware of the situation and had already contacted Mr. J.A. Sadler, Director of Welfare and Miss M. Jamieson, Regional Administrator. It was agreed to send the mobile disaster kitchen together with Welfare Workers from Courtenay and Nanaimo to Alberni.
5. The Provincial Chief of Rescue Services, Mr. K.E. Jackson, was phoned and told to proceed to the scene of the disaster with his fully equipped rescue truck.
6. The Provincial Communications Officer, Mr. S.D. Ranns, was also instructed to proceed to Alberni with a communications van and twelve portable 2-way radios. Mr. Somerville, Victoria Zone Co-ordinator, by this time had proceeded to Duncan and had gathered three portable radio sets on his way to the disaster scene.
7. The Provincial Civil Defence Office was not opened but the house number of the Director of Training, Mr. L.R.A. Hart, was designated as an emergency number and all calls were directed to him at that number and relayed by him to those concerned.
8. Mr. Carl Boehm, Regional Director, Emergency Measures Organization, phoned and offered assistance.

- 9. Mr. D. Smith, Saanich C.D. Co-ordinator, gathered a crew of five workers and proceeded by car to the disaster scene to assist the rescue truck in its operations there.
- 10. The Assistant Co-ordinator proceeded to the scene of the disaster, arriving at approximately 12:00 noon where he met Mr. L.J. Wallace, the Deputy Provincial Secretary, who had arrived a short while earlier. An examination was made of the damaged areas, after which a temporary headquarters was set up in a small room adjoining the R.C.M.P. office in Alberni.
- 11. Liaison was established from Civil Defence to the Provincial Welfare Services, R.C.M.P., Highways and the Mayors of Alberni and Port Alberni and the local Civil Defence authorities.
- 12. Mr. J.F.A. Lister, Provincial C.D. Co-ordinator, arrived from Vancouver and took over the operation and contacted Mr. W.W. Mathers, Director of Operations and Planning, and other members of the Provincial staff and established a permanent office for the duration of the disaster operations in the Alberni Fire Hall.
- 13. The attached reports were prepared by Mr. W.W. Mathers, Director of Operations and Planning for the Provincial Civil Defence and Mr. A.G. Gilmore, Welfare Supervisor, Provincial Civil Defence.

- - - - -

REPORT ON THE ALBERNI TIDAL WAVE DISASTER
by W.W. Mathers, Director of Operations and Planning

The aim of this report is to review action taken by Provincial Civil Defence resulting from the Tidal Waves which struck the twin cities of Alberni and Port Alberni on the night of the 27th/28th March, 1964.

The Alaskan Earthquake of 27th March 1964 created tidal waves in the Alberni Inlet. They struck the cities as follows:

<u>WAVES</u>	<u>TIMES</u>	<u>HEIGHT ABOVE NORMAL</u>
		<u>HIGH TIDE</u>
First	28/ 0010-15	8 feet
Second	28/ 0115	10 feet
Third	28/ 0300	6 feet
Fourth	28/ 0430	5 feet
Fifth	28/ 0515	5 feet
Sixth	28/ 0645	5 feet

A wave surge continued in the inlet for approximately 18 hours.

Damage in the Alberni area was centred on the low-lying areas along the north bank of the Somass River from Rogers Creek to Russel Road on the west, on the north Watson Road, the southern third of the Indian Reserve, Forest Road, and on the east, Elizabeth Street, Swansome Street and Gertrude Street.

- a. Damage to improvements (buildings, etc.) ranged from total destruction to minor water damage. There were no fires due to early action by B.C. Hydro crews who "tied back" hot wires.
- b. Buildings not bolted to their foundations were swept inland for up to 1, 000 feet. Those with concrete block construction or of wood frame fixed to foundations moved only a short distance.
- c. Log booms and boats in the inlet were carried high on shore causing heavy damage and providing obstructions to rescue operations.
- d. Heavy deposits of silt on all submerged objects contributed materially to damage and man-hours required for clean-up.
- e. Considerable fire risk was caused by propane gas escaping from storage tanks to lie on the water but a ban on smoking lessened the problems and fires did not develop.
- f. The sewage system was undamaged but the sewage "lagoon" serving the cities was filled with logs removed as top priority by the owners, MacMillan and Bloedel.
- g. Dyke walls of the "lagoon" were weakened as material washed away but were rebuilt immediately by the R.C.E.
- h. Heavy industry was halted until after clean-up was carried out by the companies concerned.
- i. Many small businesses in the affected areas suffered damage to stock and equipment. Further loss was experienced by block-off of the areas concerned pending clean-up and arrival of damage assessment teams.
- j. R.C.M.P. assumed rigid control immediately and there was no looting. Sightseers were kept out of the damage area.
- k. No deaths were reported and there were few injuries.

Civil Defence

- a. The City of Port Alberni discontinued Civil Defence in 1963.
- b. The City of Alberni had maintained an organization on a small scale but the Co-ordinator was in hospital with a heart attack.
- c. The recently elected Mayor and Council of Port Alberni has just agreed to participate once more in Civil Defence but time had been too short to develop an organization.
- d. Lack of Civil Defence organization delayed warning Provincial Civil Defence of the disaster until news was heard on the news broadcasts.
- e. Assisted by the Canadian Red Cross and the Salvation Army, the local office of the Provincial Department of Social Welfare had fed and housed all displaced families by 8:00 A.M.

Situation at 1200 hours 28th March

- a. Much of the water had subsided except in the very low-lying areas. Greatest damage was in the residential area of the City of Alberni where the City Hall was also partially inundated.
- b. Most residences and businesses on the foreshore had suffered damage of varying degrees.
- c. R.C.M.P., Municipal Engineers, Provincial Welfare, industry and a local volunteer Search and Rescue unit were deeply involved. Municipal Health units were examining the situation. Many volunteers were offering their services.

Early Organization

At 7:00 P.M. on 28th March a joint City Council Meeting was called and at 8:30 P.M. expanded. During this meeting a joint Civil Defence Co-ordinator was appointed on a temporary basis and an Alberni Valley Disaster Committee set up with Headquarters in the Alberni Fire Hall. Chairmen were appointed to head up sub-committees. (See Annex "A".) Civil authorities could see no need for wireless equipment or the Rescue Truck so they were returned to Victoria. Later this action was proven to have been in error. (See below.)

Situation 29th March

- a. On Sunday, the 29th, a period of "after shock" and fatigue appeared. People sorted out their problems. A meeting of the Alberni Valley Disaster Committee was held. Mr. Thomas Douglas, C.C.F. M.P., was present as was Mr. Carl Boehm, Director of E.M.O. for the B.C. region. Chairmen of sub-committees reported on progress.
- b. On his return to Victoria, the Provincial Civil Defence Co-ordinator prepared the necessary documents for Army callout and presented them to the Provincial Secretary.

Situation 30th March

- a. The Provincial Co-ordinator of Civil Defence, Mr. J.F.A. Lister, despatched a team to the Disaster Area, headed by the Director of Operations and Plans, Mr. W.W. Mathers. It arrived during the evening of 30th March. (See Annex "B".)

Members were:

Mr. J.D. Somerville, Co-ordinator, Victoria Zone
Mr. K.E.G. Jackson, Head of Rescue Service
Mr. K.R.H. Roberts, Head of Warden Service

- b. The Rescue Truck and one station wagon were taken. The team established itself in the Fire Hall and assumed control of the Alberni Valley Disaster Headquarters. After arranging for other members of the team to find accommodation, set up a Resources Board, Situation Map, Message System, log, duty roster and test communications. The D.O. & P. called on the two mayors and made a quick reconnaissance of the damaged area.
- c. Requests for advice and assistance flowed in all night as they did without cessation for the next several days.

Situation 31st March

- a. On 31st March, Chairmen of the sub-committees were contacted. Priorities were established and laid down for all phases of clearing and reconstruction, damage assessment and Welfare requirements.

- b. During the morning advance parties of the Canadian Army arrived and by nightfall the main force has assembled, consisting of:

RCE with heavy equipment - 3 Officers, 151 other Ranks

QOR of C - 6 Officers, 83 other Ranks.
- c. At 7:30 a meeting was held of the Joint Councils and at 8:30 Civil Defence convened a meeting of the Disaster Committee for which Minutes are attached as Annex "C".

Situation 1st April

- a. By agreement with the Alberni Valley Disaster Committee and Civil Defence the Canadian Army detachment under command of Lt. Col. W.H.V. Matthews, MCCD, assumed clearance of roads and major debris.
- b. R.C.M.P. continued their duties in regard to traffic control and law and order.
- c. Councils prepared and administered requests for assistance, both public and through donations.
- d. Civil Defence summoned up stenographic assistance and Communications equipment consisting of 13 portables and one base unit which were dispersed to R.C.M.P., City Works and Welfare. They became invaluable. More could have been used. Two pumps were lent to the Works Department of the City of Alberni. The Civil Defence Welfare Truck did yeoman service.
- e. By this time Provincial Welfare had moved in in force and were indefatigable in their efforts, establishing Registration and Inquiry, Furniture and Clothing Depots. Much credit should go to this Provincial Department and to those in it responsible for their pre-disaster planning and organization.
- f. Civil Defence continued to co-ordinate and assumed certain executive tasks in the direction of effort to relieve pressure on the two mayors. All persons with real or assumed damage were listed and Registered through Welfare. Particulars of damage were retained for use by Damage Assessment Teams, the arrival of which was a cause of considerable perturbation on the part of the populace. In this regard the Army was restricted in its clearing efforts until such time as damage could be properly estimated.
- g. Restoration of utilities continued.

Situation 2nd April

- a. During this day work continued at top speed by all concerned.
- b. Civil Defence commenced mapping and charting of all damage. Work was commenced on drafting of a new detailed Civil Defence Plan for the joint cities of Alberni and Port Alberni. The Disaster Area was visited by the Minister and Deputy Minister of Public Works, by the Provincial Emergency Measures Officer, Mr. J. Wallace, and by the Deputy Provincial Co-ordinator of Civil Defence, Mr. John Erb.
- c. Offers of assistance continued to pour in and were co-ordinated. Notable amongst these was one by the Mennonite Disaster Committee.

Situation 3rd April

- a. Work continued but the crisis was over, and the main concern for all was arrival of Damage Assessment Teams. By 7:00 P.M. the airport was cleared for arrival of light aircraft.
- b. At 8:00 P.M. Mr. Lister arrived for Conferences.

Situation 4th April and succeeding days

- a. News was received that Damage Assessment crews would arrive this afternoon and by noon the Army had reduced its force to 135 all ranks.
- b. A relief detachment of Civil Defence consisting of Messrs. Snider and Craig arrived from Nanaimo and took over charge of operations.
- c. At 3:30 P.M. a meeting was convened between the Mayors and Head of the Provincial Damage Assessment Group at which the Provincial Co-ordinator, Mr. J.F.A. Lister, was present. Responsibilities were defined and on the following days persons with claims were interviewed, properties were assessed and the Army commenced demolitions.
- d. On Monday, 6th April, Mr. Mathers revisited the distressed area and the Civil Defence component was removed, leaving Mr. Les. Hughes, the newly appointed Co-ordinator, in charge.

Daily Reports

Verbal reports were submitted by telephone to the Provincial Co-ordinator daily at 11:30 A.M. and 4:00 P.M.

A sitrep was forwarded daily through B. C. Forest Radio.

Transport

In future operations of this type a minimum of one small station wagon, one carryall, one Rescue Truck, one Welfare Truck and one Communications Van are required.

Communications

It is recommended that, for all future operations, a minimum of 12 portables and one base station should be held ready at Provincial Headquarters. Similar equipment should be strategically available for Civil Disaster under control of each Zone. Adequate communication ability at the scene of a disaster is the most important element to gain and maintain control.

Stenographic Assistance

The team despatched to a disaster must have immediate use of a typewriter and stenographer.

Maps

Zone Co-ordinators must ensure that full 1/50,000 map coverage of areas surrounding municipalities is properly mounted in all Civil Defence Headquarters in such a manner it is easily transportable to the scene of the disaster.

Signs

Signs to mark Civil Defence Headquarters should be prepared and held strategically in all Zones ready for Civil Disaster.

Search and Rescue

The Alberni Valley Volunteer Search and Rescue Group were invaluable during early hours of the disaster. They have now joined Civil Defence as a body. Efforts should be made to enlist similar groups in all municipalities with a minimum of "Red Tape". Such as is required should be explained to them.

Warning Systems

The Alberni disaster pointed up a requirement for all municipalities to possess a loud and distinctive system of warning for Civil Disaster, different from the sirens used by NSAWS. The tidal wave took only 10 minutes to move from Bamfield to Alberni -- a distance of 40 miles. The answer may lie in loud hailers mounted on local police units.

Plans

No one in the Albernis is today skeptical of the need for a comprehensive and detailed Civil Defence Plan detailing responsibilities to officials by position. The plan is in preparation with the unanimous support of both Councils.

Leadership

This report would be incomplete without reference to the able and unselfish leadership provided by Mayors Bishop and Hammer and members of their Councils or the indefatigable efforts of the City Managers, Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Thane and Heads of the various Municipal Services. Mr. Bob Waugh of the City Works Department in Alberni deserved special recognition.

Summary

- a. The Tidal Waves which struck the Albernis created a situation different to that normally presented in flood disasters. The second wave, travelling 240 miles per hour on top of a tide created by the first wave and already 8 feet higher than normal, smashed everything in its path and tossed enormous logs and other debris, including buildings, boats and automobiles, up to 1,000 feet. It then receded to be followed by a succession of lesser waves.
- b. The destruction occurred practically without warning. No warning system existed for Civil Disaster. Some very few persons, such as Mayor Hammer of Port Alberni, Mr. Les Hughes and Mr. Bob Waugh of Alberni, had been interested previously in Civil Defence. They took immediate action to prepare an organization, recruit assistance, locate rescue equipment and delineate responsibilities. They were also prominent in rescue operations at a time when all was confusion, much of which would have been minimized greatly had the Cities been organized before disaster struck.
- c. The Albernis Disaster is estimated at a loss to the Community of \$5,000,000.00. Fortunately no lives were lost, no fires were started and no epidemics took hold. It was a cheap lesson for other communities and Governments in British Columbia, to prepare their Civil Defence arrangements before Emergency. The earthquakes which devastated Anchorage or San Francisco could equally well have struck the Albernis or Vancouver.

RESOURCES

Disaster Committees

1. Main Committee - Mayor F. Bishop, Mayor L. Hammer
2. Residential Damage - Alderman S.M. Blair, City Manager James Sawyer, D. Thain.
3. Business and Industrial - Alderman McLean, Harbour Commissioner Blake.
4. Alberni Valley Disaster Fund - Alderman Perry and Bank Managers.
5. Welfare - Alderman Gollard, Rehabilitation, Health, Clothing.
6. Press and Public Information - Mayor L. Hammer.
7. Works and Utilities - Alderman Hamilton.
8. Civil Defence - Mayor F. Bishop and Alderman Reynolds.

Army

Representatives:

B.C. Area - Lt. Col. W.M. Matthews.
O.C.R.C.E. - Mayor Fisher 3/150 Community Hall.
O.C. Queen's Own Rifles - Major Cross, Cdn. Scots.

Health

Dr. Webster - Health, Mrs. Joan Grace - R.N. 6 Nurses,
Mr. Ratner - Sanitary Engineer.

Welfare

Mr. A.G. Gilmore, Miss Jamieson and Mrs. Hunt - Lodging.
Mr. C.W. Gorby - Registration and Inquiry at 264 Elizabeth
Street in Alberni (St. Andrews Hall) and Port Alberni
City Hall.
Capt. P. Roed - Clothing - at 10th and Redford Street.
Furniture - at the Canadian Legion, 3rd and Bute
Street.
Feeding - Mobile Emergency Civil Defence
Welfare Feeding Unit.

Communications

1 Motorola Base Control - 13 Motorola Portables.

Distribution: R.C.M.P. - 4
Alberni City Works - 3
Salvation Army - 2
Welfare - 2
Spare - 2

Fire

Normal. Chief, Gilmore - Alberni.
Chief, Venables - Port Alberni.

Police

Corporal Woodfin, 60 R.C.M.P. and 14 Auxiliaries.

Engineering

Bob Waugh, Chief Alberni and Port Alberni Engineer Service.
Len Crowshaw, Port Alberni.

Rescue

Alberni Valley Search and Rescue.

31 March 1964.

His Worship F.A. Bishop,
Mayor of the City of Alberni,
300 Victoria Quay,
Alberni, B. C.

Dear Mayor Bishop:

I am writing to tell you what a great privilege it was for me to attend the joint Meeting of the Councils of the City of Port Alberni and the City of Alberni last Saturday evening. On that occasion you formed the Alberni Valley Disaster Committee and numerous other Committees to deal with the problems arising from the terrible disaster which occurred in your area.

I would say that it is apparent from the decisive action taken by the two Councils, under the guidance of yourself and Mayor Hammer and the steps being taken by Federal and Provincial Governments, including the Canadian Army, and other Agencies, that the task of rehabilitation will be accomplished effectively.

I decided on Saturday that it would be desirable to set up a more or less permanent Civil Defence co-ordinating office in your area for the next week or so and at the moment it is staffed by Mr. Mathers, the Director of Operations and Planning, by Mr. Somerville, the Victoria Zone Co-ordinator, and by Messrs. Jackson and Roberts, two other members of my staff. I feel sure that these people will be of great assistance to you and Mayor Hammer in the task of assisting in the work of co-ordinating, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Their presence also should be of assistance to Mr. Hughes, who I understand is to be appointed as Municipal Civil Defence Co-ordinator for the two Cities.

I hope to see you again before the week is out.

Yours sincerely,

J. F. A. Lister,
Provincial C.D. Co-ordinator.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ALBERNI AND PORT ALBERNI
DISASTER COMMITTEE AT PROVINCIAL CIVIL DEFENCE CONTROL
HEADQUARTERS, ALBERNI FIRE HALL 31 MARCH 1964

The following attended:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>APPOINTMENT</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
Margaret Trebett	Twin City Times	3-8171
Grant Lawrence	Out of town	
W. McAdam	Executive Assistant to Stuart Fleming Out of town	
Jim Sawyer	Alberni City Manager	City Hall
Max Ratner	Provincial Public Health Inspector	4-1281
Dallas Bradshaw	West Coast Advocate	3-7311
Captain Peter Roed	Salvation Army	3-7912
Barry Kumph	Canadian Red Cross	3-9633
Joan Grace	Provincial Health Department	4-1281
Barbara Longdon	Provincial Health Department	4-1281
Basil Alexander	N.E.S. Regional - Out of town	
Stan McInnes	N. E. S. Local	4-0151
Mr. Foxcroft	Alderman, Alberni	3-3677
W. Anderson	Alderman, Alberni	3-6342
Lt. Col. W.H. Matthews	Chief of Staff, B.C. Area, Army	
Major W. B. Fisher	CO. 3 Fld. Sqn. R.C.E., Army	
C.M. Blair	Alderman, Alberni	3-7355 & 3-7916
Fred Malaterre	Canadian Red Cross	4-1348
Mrs. Elizabeth Hunt	Social Welfare	3-9401
Miss M. Jamieson	Social Welfare	3-9401
C.W. Gorby	Social Welfare R&I	3-9401
F. Bishop	Alberni Mayor	4-1241
J. Squires	M.L.A.	4-1973
T. Barnett	M.P.	
L. Reynolds	Alderman, Port Alberni	3-3323
Len Crowshaw	Works	3-6901
How. McLean	Alderman, Port Alberni	3-7852
Les Hammer	Port Alberni Mayor	3-2146
Jack Perry	Alderman, Port Alberni	3-7120
Bob Dalton	Alderman, Port Alberni	3-7626
Bill Gollard	Alderman, Port Alberni	4-0451
Roy James	Alderman, Alberni	3-3637
Denny Thain	City Clerk	3-7242
Bryce Blake	Bus. & Indus. Committee	3-7331
Cpl. R. Woodfin	R.C.M.P.	3-2311
Les Hughes	C. D. Co-ordinator	3-5938
Graham Cook	Bank of Commerce, Alberni	3-2512
A. Armstrong	Alberni Board of Trade	3-3571
R. Waugh	City Works Superintendent, Alberni	3-3195

Mayor Bishop was in the Chair and opened the meeting by calling on the Welfare Committee to make their report.

Alderman W.G. Gollard called on Miss Jamieson to make a report.

Miss Jamieson said that an additional three social workers had been added to her staff since the last report. Two hundred persons have been assisted to date, and many enquiries answered. The Welfare Emergency Feeding Truck has been in daily use with coffee and sandwiches.

Mr. Ratner, Provincial Public Health Inspector, said sewers and water pipes had remained intact. No immunization had been undertaken. The silt has been analyzed and found O.K.

Mr. Reynolds asked if the Red Cross had worked independently. Answer--no, with Welfare.

Salvation Army--The clothing centre has been open long hours. Little demand has been made on the donated furniture, most of it was already flood damaged.

Mayor Hammer announced that a truckload of second-hand furniture from Standard Furniture of Victoria has been donated and is on the way. Also \$5,000.00 of new clothing has been given by a lady in New Westminster.

Public Works and Royal Canadian Engineers--Alderman McLean said some Port Alberni sewers were "tied off".

Beginning 1 April, Works Department trucks and D7 bulldozers will fill in the lagoon (thicken dyke walls). Alderman McLean emphasized that this work must not conflict with the repair to MacMillan & Bloedel pipe line, which is essential to industry.

Colonel W.H. Matthews said that units of the Queen's Own Rifles are assisting with the clean-up. The engineers are using a limited amount of heavy equipment. (See under.) Direction is required as the immediate work is limited and will not last more than one and a half days. There have been requests not to clean up until an assessment of the damage has been made. Alderman McLean--Substantiation of claims would be increasingly difficult as work of clean-up progresses. No demolitions can be carried out as detailed assessment must first be made.

Mr. Sawyer said that no direction had come from the Provincial Government and would not be expected before Thursday. The Federal decision for help must come later, after the Provincial request for same.

Mayor Hammer said that certain work would be held up until a Provincial Cabinet Meeting had provided direction and decision.

Mr. Squire said he had made efforts to obtain decisions from Government but so far without success.

Mayor Bishop agreed that no evidence could be destroyed before assessment.

Mayor Hammer mentioned that contractors were offering to restore houses or move them back at a price. He advised no action at this time. While free help was available the trade should be disregarded.

Mr. Sawyer pointed out that houses damaged and being paid for on time (first or second mortgage) would require legal advice before any steps could be taken. The owner may decide on destruction or removal only if he has clear title and no objection to results of later appraisal.

Alderman J. Perry, Alberni Valley Disaster Fund--The Committee was trying to get donations income tax exempt. Banks and Credit Unions would accept money and issue a temporary receipt for the present.

Simpsons Sears has contributed \$5,000.00 worth of goods; these will be distributed by Welfare. Woodwards has donated \$1,000.00 plus food and clothing. Eatons has made a donation. All funds will be collected into Bank of Commerce.

Aldermen Blair and Reynolds suggested that if a national fund was started all communities would benefit. Alderman Reynolds suggested that the fund would be altered to include other places.

Chairman Bishop decided to not change the name of the fund but did not rule out help to other centres.

Mr. Somerville, commenting on the Civil Defence side, pointed out the necessity for heads or chiefs of services to be represented in a headquarters, for a successful and efficient Headquarters in one place rather than 2 or 3 report centres.

Mr. Mathers emphasized that Civil Defence was a projection of existing services at all levels of Government into their emergency functions.

Alderman Blair, speaking on appraisal, said the Messrs. Thain and Sawyer had worked hard to obtain a rough estimate of damage. 55 property owners suffered losses--some own more than one property. 14 homes were badly damaged and 375 properties adversely affected. Total damage about \$5,000,000.00, excluding damage to heavy industries and private cars.

Mr. McAdam regretted the personal loss and felt that this might be covered by a national relief fund. In Ottawa both party leaders

assured the stricken cities that Federal funds would be made available.

Police Corporal Woodfin reported that there had been no accidents to vehicles and only one case of looting. 45 men were made available. He praised the work of new police auxiliaries. 60 men, 9 cars, 2 boats available 1 April. Requests for businesses to open but area is still blocked off by police.

Mayor Bishop and Mayor Hammer thanked and congratulated Miss Jamieson of Emergency Welfare Services.

A Welfare registration of all those affected by the flood is to be started 1 April at City Hall, Port Alberni and St. Andrews Church, 264 Johnston Street, Alberni. Heads of families only need register.

Mayor Bishop suggested that valuable time of both mayors was taken up by answering phones better handled by a Public Relations Officer.

Alderman McLean pointed out that 100 small businesses suffered extreme loss but had tried to get going. Proof of this damage or loss of equipment may be difficult.

- - - - -

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE REPORT ON THEIR SERVICES
IN THE ALBERNI VALLEY TIDAL WAVE DISASTER.--March 28 -
April 10, 1964--by A. G. Gilmore, Welfare Supervisor, Provincial
Civil Defence

On the night of March 27-28 a series of tidal waves generated by disastrous earthquakes in Alaska swept down the west coast of North America. In some areas the rising tides went unnoticed, but in others their effect was devastating, particularly along the Alberni Canal, in the twin cities of Alberni and Port Alberni, and the villages of Hot Springs Cove and Zeballos and Amai, a logging camp on Amai Inlet.

This report concerns the activities of the Department of Social Welfare in the hours and days that followed, and is in three parts. The first section is concerned with a chronological record of the Services provided, together with a summary of these activities under five headings. The second section is the personal record of the district social worker who first received a call for help, while the third section lists a series of recommendations and suggestions put forward by the Social Workers, Department of Social Welfare personnel, and volunteers involved.

PART I

- 00:15 hrs.-28/3/64 Estimated time of arrival of first tidal wave between 10 and 15 minutes after midnight.
- 00:30 hrs. Mrs. Pat Adang, District Social Worker, receives a call for help from client whose home has been flooded.
- 00:40 hrs. Worker arrives, finds clients home had about a foot of water over the floor. Helps evacuate family of eight to neighbour's home on higher ground.
- 01:00 hrs. (approx.) Worker asked Salvation Army under Capt. Roed for help and notified member of City Council of situation. Families affected began moving in with friends, commercial facilities and hotel lobby. Others waited by their homes, wondering whether to return home or go to higher ground, because another wave might come.
- Worker continues to assist in evacuation, notifying residents in low lying areas of danger and making sure they are awake.
- 01:15 hrs. Second and highest wave strikes. Worker's car filled with evacuees is flooded and stalls --worker, 3 elderly persons, a young married couple with their baby and 2 little boys are marooned for some time on a high porch. Lights and phones knocked out in flooded area. Local radio station also knocked out and off the air.
- 03:00-0600 (approx.) Water began receding and worker and evacuees waded to neighbour's home on high ground which had opened its doors to about 20 people. People were trying to dry out clothing and provided hot coffee. This scene was repeated in many homes, and the hotel lobby, as people sat in the lamplight waiting for the morning to see just what had happened.

The homes and businesses flooded were scattered over a wide area, thus the people awakened by the first and lesser flood, by friends, the Social Worker, police and the Alberni Valley Rescue Squad had several escape routes from the area. The result was a dispersal of the evacuees to all parts of the

two cities not affected by the flooding. There was little opportunity to direct evacuees to a central reception depot. The self-reliance of the evacuees, their obvious ability to make their own emergency arrangements and the immediate response of citizens not affected by the flood resulted in them quickly finding temporary shelter.

0730 hrs.-0900 hrs. Provincial Civil Defence Welfare Supervisor notified of situation and proceeded to get situation report. Later contacted Director of Welfare and Regional Administrator. The latter arranged immediately for the dispatch of additional staff, the Welfare Disaster Unit, and the District Supervisor to the Alberni District Office.

0800 hrs. Welfare office in Alberni open for business as Emergency Welfare Services Headquarters. A division of responsibility was agreed to. The Welfare Department would assume responsibility for co-ordinating all Emergency Welfare Services, using the District Office as a Welfare Headquarters. The Department would also act as a central point for coordinating lodging needs, supervise the mobile feeding vehicle and provide vouchers for food, clothing and lodging where required. The Salvation Army agreed to be responsible for the collection, processing and issuing of used clothing and furniture and the Red Cross agreed to assist the Welfare Department in finding and arranging accommodation and in the emergency feeding programme. Volunteers, clerical staff and Public Health nurses, working at Welfare Headquarters, began job of finding accommodation for persons who had been temporarily accommodated in the emergency in Church Halls, Hotel lobbies, with neighbours, etc.

A congregate facility was opened in the Sergeants Mess of the local militia camp for 3 large families. Feeding was provided via Department of Social Welfare vouchers and the Canadian Red Cross Society in commercial facilities (restaurants) and via the mobile disaster unit to volunteers working in the flooded area. Those staying with friends ate in the residences.

A used clothing and furniture collection was begun immediately by the Salvation Army in Alberni, Port Alberni and Nanaimo and several other communities. This was issued on request by Salvation Army at two depots they established, one for clothing and one for furniture. In addition, a local department store gave a \$5,000 credit for merchandise to the Welfare Department to administer. This was used mostly for clothing and bedding, and was controlled by the issuing of regular departmental vouchers.

Inquiries were answered as fully as possible but since a great number of evacuees had made their own arrangements and the local radio station was off the air, it was exceedingly difficult to learn the whereabouts of a great number of people.

As the local Station was knocked off the air requests for help and directions were made over a New Westminster Radio Station, CKNW, which is well received in the area.

2200 hrs.

Welfare office closed for night. During the day accommodation had been found for 133 people, and an additional 40 were in congregate facilities at the Army Camp. Meals had been arranged for those requiring it, and clothing issued as required. Volunteers, recruited during the day, had been most helpful, with Government employees from all Departments and particularly the Public Health nurses, assisting.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

The Welfare Office opens 9:00 A.M. - volunteers, including a driver for the Welfare Feeding Truck and women to serve food, others to collect, sort and distribute clothing and furniture, were recruited and assigned. The movement of people continued with re-arrangements necessary, the Welfare Department being responsible for recording offers of help and assigning people in need of it.

Volunteers in the Welfare Office (H.Q.) answered the phones, recording all offers of help and requests for aid. Three extra Welfare staff members arrive from Nanaimo.

MARCH 30 - APRIL 10

Office hours as required. Duty workers always on call. Activity as a result of the flood during this period was of several types:

- a. Meeting the emergency needs of people known to the Department, such as Social Assistance and Old Age Allowance recipients who lost their groceries, clothing, furniture and in many instances their homes(rented or owned) in the disaster. (Food, clothing, lodging, furniture and bedding provided as explained below.)
- b. Meeting the emergency needs of citizens not previously known to the Department. These needs were food (via grocery vouchers), bedding, clothing, and particularly shoes, which were provided either through the used clothing resources of the Salvation Army or via a voucher on the department store' s \$5,000 merchandise credit account, and furniture. The latter item was also distributed through the facilities of the Salvation Army.
- c. Recruiting and assigning volunteers to:
 - i. help in the collection, sorting and distribution of clothing and furniture.
 - ii. to man the C. D. Welfare Services mobile Disaster Unit. This patrolled the flood area providing a hot beverage or milk plus sandwiches to volunteers and police on traffic and security patrols, volunteers, municipal employees, residents and army personnel working in the clean-up parties.
 - iii. assisting in the Welfare Office, doing clerical tasks, answering phones, running errands, etc.
 - iv. to arrange for transportation for evacuees moving to other places of residence or return to their homes, etc.
- d. Answering inquiries both as to whereabouts of individuals and availability of goods and services. A card system to administer

this was set up on Monday, March 30th. In this regard it was considered desirable to register all those persons displaced by the flooding with the result Mr. W. G. Gorby, Provincial Chief of Registration and Inquiry, arrived on March 31st to organize and carry out this operation. As so many people had made their own arrangements for accommodation, no central record of their safety or whereabouts existed. The operational capability to do this was contingent on being able to communicate with the community. Fortunately, the local radio station was able to get back on the air, greatly expediting the successful conclusion of this operation by noon, April 3rd.

The total number registered were:

164 family groups	totalling	652 people
single men	"	24
single women	"	<u>18</u>
		694 people

In all, Evacuee Registration and other surveys indicated:

	55 homes were a total loss
	14 were a partial loss - off foundations
	<u>306</u> were flooded with damage ranging from minor to severe
Total	375 dwellings. (Note: this does not include commercial establishments or businesses.)

SERVICES

Feeding:

The majority of evacuees subsequent to the flooding ate with their friends, relatives or neighbours with whom they were billeted. Departmental food vouchers were issued to evacuees to supplement the billetee's food costs or to permit evacuees to cook for themselves in rented accommodation, or to replace household foodstuffs ruined by the flooding.

Those persons in congregate facilities, totalling about 40 people during the peak period, were transported to a local restaurant for feeding. By agreement, this was arranged by, and paid for, by the local disaster committee of the Canadian Red Cross.

Civil Defence volunteers, police and civilian workers and residents working in the flooded area during the clean-up period were supplied with sandwiches and coffee or milk by the Provincial Welfare Department's Civil Defence Disaster truck, which was manned by volunteers operating under the supervision of the local Welfare Supervisor.

Clothing:

Only a small amount of used clothing was on hand at the time of the disaster. Fortunately the Salvation Army officer at Alberni, Capt. Roed, had the nucleus of an organization to call on, was familiar with the procedures involved and had the advantage of attending an E.W.S. course at Arnprior in 1961. A collection, sorting, sizing and distribution organization for used clothing was quickly organized and operational. The need, together with announcements to put the clothing operation into effect, was broadcast over New Westminster Radio Station CKNW.

To supplement these resources, vouchers were issued by the Department of Social Welfare Office on a \$5,000 merchandising credit account donated by a department store. Social workers mentioned that shoes were a particular item most often requested. (Voucher forms normally used by the Department were used for all authorizations of groceries, meals, clothing and lodging.)

During the first 48 hours clothing and bedding arrived from several Vancouver Island and lower B.C. mainland communities, as a result of Salvation Army, Red Cross, Service Clubs and religious organizations efforts.

Registration and Inquiry:

Desirable as it was to have a central registry of all evacuees, the actual compilation of this information was not considered possible during the first 48 hours. The Welfare Office began registering all persons requesting help on the regular E.W.S. forms as soon as these arrived on the Welfare Truck on the Saturday morning. There was no means of requesting evacuees who had made their own arrangements, and were scattered throughout the community, to report for registration until the local radio station was back on the air.

This operation was possible by March 31st, and Registrations began at two locations on Wednesday, April 1st. Public Health nurses and volunteers individually registered evacuees on the regular E.W.S. Registration card.

There was a small but regular flow of people for the two days registrations were taken. It was considered that all persons affected by the flooding were registered, and the operation was successful. A total of 694 evacuees were recorded, providing a central registry for whatever purposes it may be required.

Because the telephone communications remained intact with the rest of the province and people made their own arrangements for notifying friends, there was little need for the cards for Inquiry purposes after the first 24 hours.

Lodging:

Of the 694 registered evacuees, 130 were placed by the Welfare Department and Red Cross, the rest making their own arrangements with friends. Of those placed by the Red Cross and/or Welfare Department some were subsequently assisted in finding and/or paying for rented accommodation.

Because of the difficulties of providing bedding, supervising feeding and administering congregate or group type shelters, every effort was made to place the evacuees in private homes. Because of the response by Alberni and Port Alberni citizens unaffected by the flood, this approach was successful with congregate facilities required only for three larger family units, totalling 40 persons. These were housed in the Sergeants Mess of the Alberni Army Camp (Militia) and supervised by a public health nurse.

An E.W.S. Lodging Survey was completed in Alberni in 1961 but its results were not used in this instance.

Counselling and Emergency Aid:

Naturally the evacuees were concerned about their loss of personal property and in some cases employment. Much of this concern was alleviated by the quick and positive action taken by the Mayors of the Alberni and Port Alberni and senior governments in assuring people that help would be forthcoming. Information precis were prepared and distributed and the press and radio were wisely used.

Many evacuees came to the Welfare Office to report damage, personal property losses, and to ask for help in replacing furniture, appliances and clothing. Emergency needs only were met by the Department, such as food, shelter and immediate clothing and bedding requirements. They were directed to make a list of these losses and advised where to leave this.

Employment was a problem for some because the large pulp, paper and lumber complex along the waterfront had been hard hit and a temporary closure was necessary. The U.I.C. brought in extra staff to ensure the local office could quickly process all claims and temporary assistance was granted by the Department to those in need and not eligible for help elsewhere.

Staffing:

The District Office at Alberni serves the Alberni Valley, the twin cities, and west coast of the Island, and normally has four district social workers and a stenographic staff of 3 people, one of which is part time. The staff are supervised by the District Supervisor resident in Courtenay, 82 miles away.

At the time of the disaster fortunately, three of the workers and one stenographer were in town and the District Supervisor arrived mid-morning of Saturday, March 28th.

The Regional Administrator, after a personal survey of the situation, arranged for two additional staff to arrive on the Sunday to relieve the local staff, who had worked all but a few of the previous 36 hours. In addition, an experienced senior worker from another office was appointed acting District Supervisor for a one-month period to co-ordinate the emergency Welfare Services programme. Three extra workers were on duty the first week and two extra the second week, to assist in the rehabilitation and emergency aid programme.

Extra stenographic help was increased by the part-time worker going on full time, and the Service was fortunate in having the services of several very capable and effective volunteers.

Communications and Control:

While telephone and power lines were down in the disaster area, phone service in the rest of the community and to Victoria and other parts of the Province were unaffected, though overloading delayed calls, other than emergency calls, by about 2 hours on the Saturday, March 28th. Extra phones were put in on the Monday by the B.C. Telephone Company. There was also a mobile radio link to the mobile Welfare truck, to Civil Defence Headquarters, and the furniture and clothing depots.

Controls and the chain of command normally in use in the Department remained in effect, with the Regional Administrator in charge, delegating responsibility to the District Supervisor and District Social Workers. It was agreed in the first few hours that the Welfare Department would look after lodging and feeding, assisted by the Red Cross; the Salvation Army would assume responsibility for the collection and distribution of clothing, and furniture; that the Department would also do any counselling, issue emergency aid, look after Registration and Inquiry Services, and would act as a central Welfare co-ordinating service.

Resources and Fiscal Policy:

No funds had been set aside by government for special emergency Welfare Services in the first few hours subsequent to the disaster, but senior Welfare officials were requested to provide whatever services they deemed necessary. Further, under the existing Social Assistance Act and its regulations, a wide variety of services and direct assistance to individuals in need can be provided. Thus, in effect, the normal procedures and forms of the Department were used and amended as needed to meet changing demands.

Relationships and Co-ordination with Headquarters and Other Emergency Services

Alberni and Port Alberni had previously disbanded their Civil Defence service but the recently elected mayors and councils of both communities had ordered its re-institution and re-organization. Insufficient time had elapsed for this to take effect. However, community leaders and officials, under the positive leadership of Mayor E.L. Hammer, of Port Alberni, and Mayor F.A. Bishop, of Alberni, moved quickly to restore services and meet the needs of the citizens.

A trained Civil Defence officer to act as their assistant to set up a co-ordinating Headquarters in the first few hours, however, would have been of great benefit and assistance to the mayors and their officials.

Other West Coast Communities:

During Saturday, March 28th, there was considerable concern expressed by Provincial officials for other B.C. west coast communities. The Search Sea Rescue Co-ordination Centre in Vancouver began to collect data from the Canadian Coast Guard, R.C.M.P., air lines, logging camps, canneries, etc.

Hot Springs Cove

It was from the Search Sea Rescue Centre that Provincial Welfare authorities learned of damage to Hot Springs Cove, where 16 of the 18 houses in the village were destroyed. The Indian Affairs Department Agent in Alberni undertook to look after this group of about 40 people, who were taken by boat to Ahousat. Clothing from the Salvation Army was despatched as soon as transportation could be arranged.

Zeballos

In this community 30 homes were knocked off their foundations, and considerable damage was done to personal property such as furniture and appliances from silt and salt water. This group made its own emergency arrangements.

Amai

This small logging community was also hard hit by tidal waves which struck 10 buildings, resulting in considerable personal property damage to the homes involved. In all, approximately 5 families, involving about 25 family members and 12 single persons, were temporarily homeless and reportedly spent two nights in the open. It is understood their radio telephone communications system was also knocked out by the waves. This group, of necessity, also made their own emergency survival arrangements.

SUMMARY:

While Alberni and Port Alberni did not have a disaster plan, the initiative and abilities of civic officials quickly compensated for this lack. In the welfare field, district office staff members, knowing that welfare services in a disaster were their responsibility, moved quickly and effectively to meet the emergency needs of those in need. Senior departmental personnel gave them every support in terms of providing extra staff and supervisory personnel and resources. While none of the social workers first involved in the disaster operation had attended a Civil Defence Welfare Course, they quickly adapted existing procedures to meet changed needs and demands. Independently, they evolved in a few hours, through trial and error and the application of common sense, a workable emergency welfare programme that closely paralleled that planned for the Department. Indeed, so effective were their efforts, they quickly and independently had the situation well in hand by the time provincial officials arrived mid-morning of the Saturday, March 28th.

PART II

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AT TIME OF TIDAL WAVE DISASTER MARCH 27
(GOOD FRIDAY) THROUGH MARCH 28th

11:00 P.M. - We listened to T.V. of earthquake at Anchorage, Alaska, and mention of tidal wave proceeding down coast of B.C. It was thought the effect would not be felt here as the Alberni Inlet stretches so far inland.

Approx. 12:30 A.M. - March 28th - This worker received a phone call from a family (that are clients of ours) stating that a high tide had washed over the floor of their house on Victoria Quay. They asked if we could come and help them. They weren't sure whether they should stay at home, or whether we could find another place for them overnight. Worker drove down to assess the situation and found evidence that the water had been about a foot over their floor boards - shoes and some clothing and food were soaked. We helped them move as much as possible to high ground at the roadside and then asked people across the street if they would help them out overnight, as our clients' house had a shaky foundation and it was too dark to see how seriously it had been damaged. We went back to the house with the 16-year-old boy to load the car with bedding and rest of clothing and helped carry out the T.V. set. Asked other lads on the street to make sure everyone in the other adjacent houses was awake.

Some of the Alberni Valley Volunteer Rescue Squad were coming along the street and asked if more help was needed - they then carried on to the corner of River Road and Beaver Creek where R.C.M.P. officers were asking anyone going out River Road to waken people along the route as they had just heard another wave was expected.

We thought it best to get more help so went to the nearest pay phone at the Arlington Hotel to call the Salvation Army and Civil Defence people. The hotel lobby had started to fill with women and children and the hotel keeper was arranging for them to bed down in the lobby for the night. These people had come from homes directly along the edge of the river. There was no definite information that a big wave was on its way - only the idea that one might come and it was best to stay clear for the night.

We contacted Capt. Roed of the Salvation Army and then tried to get Mayor Hammer, who we learned was out of town. As Mr. Thurston, former C.D. chief, was in hospital we were at a loss to know who else to phone. Mrs. Hammer suggested Dr. Reynolds, a Port Alberni Alderman, who we were able to reach by phone and gave him the message that there had been a minor wave and further high water was expected.

We then returned to intersection where police and the Rescue Squad personnel were directing people. We asked if help was needed and were asked to check an elderly couple on River Road, who earlier seemed loathe to leave their cabin. We went out to do this and passed people here and there along the road, standing by cars talking about whether they should go back to their homes or stay out - as the water had receded as fast as it had come. The Police and Rescue Squad had already been along the route and the old couple we were concerned with must have decided to leave, as there was no one there when we knocked.

Since we know that Brown Road, 1 block directly behind River Road, always floods to some extent at high tide in spring, we thought it best to alert the people there. It was about 1:15 A.M. We went to the only house showing a light, roused the sole occupant and suggested she get dressed in case it might be necessary to move out. We used her phone to call the other two families whose names we knew in the area. Told them we did not wish to alarm them unnecessarily but there was a warning out that a tidal wave might come, and it was best to have everyone awakened.

We helped the first woman into the car, preparing to take her up the street to her son's home, and while she sat in the car, the two men from the families we had phoned and this worker started knocking on doors to waken the other residents. Some wouldn't answer the door, and as I called across the street to ask one of the men if the house in question was occupied, my eye was caught by a low white line that looked like a 6 inch high veil of mist approaching from the direction of the river. I shouted to the man nearest it, that it might be water, but it was slightly foggy and hard to see, and he thought it was mist.

In about 30 seconds it was at our feet and welling up, and we yelled to the nearest people who were on a low verandah with 3 youngsters to get in the car. As soon as everyone was crammed in I tried to drive off, but could only go about 10 feet when the water flooded the engine and the car stalled. At first we jumped out and lifted the children on the car roof but realized that if the water continued to rise, that would be useless, so instead, decided to get to the nearest high porch.

We waded up to our thighs through the water and managed to get above it. By this time the water was about 3 feet deep in this area, which is a large flat piece of ground, causing a quicker levelling out of the wave. We missed the full brunt of the wave in this area. There were 3 people in their 70' s, a young man and his wife and their baby and 2 little boys on the porch together.

One of the men had a flashlight, and it was decided he should shine it on the water where it was coming up the steps, and if it reached the top step, we would have to break into the house and climb up to the top level of roof if possible. The owners were away, but a large glass window was adjacent to the door and entry would have been fairly easy.

As we stood on the porch, the fog lifted somewhat, and the moon came out, and we could see the water had stopped rising. In a little while a boat carrying some Rescue Squad men (I think) came down the 'erstwhile' street and shone a flashlight on us and asked if we were okay. We were, except everyone was cold and wet.

Then the water began to recede.

It is difficult to recall how long we were stranded there as it likely seemed a lot longer than it actually was. Finally, when it was down to about 1 foot deep, the two men decided to wade with a child each, to a high house and come back to let us know if it was okay for the elderly people to move to higher ground. We stayed with one little boy and the elderly ladies till the water was about 6 inches deep and then waded up the street and on up a hill where a family had opened its doors to about 20 people.

Here we were able to partially dry our clothes, and get a cup of coffee. The lights and phones had been knocked out and the radio was off the air so there was nothing to be done but wait in lamplight until it began to grow light, at which time we returned to the car and tried to start it to no avail.

We then helped carry some of the personal effects back to the house that had been left, when someone came by with the news that still another wave was expected and everyone decided to move out again. This was about 6:00 A.M. and some of the men towed this worker' s car to a safer spot off the road and then gave us a lift home, after which I went to bed for about an hour.

Couldn't sleep, so decided to go down to the office and check the damage area. Phoned one of our stenographers to let her know her services might be needed - thought the rest of the staff out of town but later met District Social Workers, Mr. Merner and Mr. Russell. Took quick trip through area where most damage done on junction of Somass and Kitsucsis Creek - noted that home from which first call had come was completely washed away. We then returned to office. Mr. Merner had opened the office and phoned our stenographer to come in.

At noon it appeared that we would likely need lots of volunteer help because it was a holiday week-end and many of the regular staff at our office and that of Public Health would be away.

Phones rang incessantly, with calls coming from people wanting accommodation, and wanting information re whereabouts of others, and people phoning offering emergency accommodation. Public Health Nurse Mrs. Grace came to our office to help. Mr. Melville the District Welfare Supervisor, came from Courtenay and Mrs. Trenette, a volunteer, also arrived. The Civil Defence Emergency Welfare Services truck arrived in the afternoon and representatives of the Red Cross, Provincial Emergency Welfare Services and Civil Defence came and Capt. Roed of the Salvation Army.

There was a need to correlate services and open communication lines between key offices such as Civil Defence, Department of Social Welfare, Salvation Army and Red Cross. Representatives from large stores offered emergency aid - the office buzzed and it is rather difficult to sort out that first few hours into actual sequence of events.

Two things were very heartening - people from all sources were offering aid and those who lost so much were keeping their heads and being very patient and cheerful. There was a general atmosphere of urgency and tenseness but good humour too. We went home for a couple of hours rest about 4:00 P. M. and returned later to the same activity.

Began transporting families and phoning churches and so on to find accommodation, also phoned service club members. A member of the government building staff, who was in town, helped in this way also. Churches made their halls available for emergency living quarters and Sgt. Anderson of the local Canadian Scottish was called to ask if the Drill Hall could be made available for families with several children. Later we were advised the Sergeants Mess would be open. This was comfortable, adequate accommodation for those large families, for whom no private homes could be found. Our office remained open till after 10:00 P.M. An emergency driver was located to spell off the Civil Defence truck driver and when it appeared that the situation was in hand we closed up for the night.

Sunday, March 29th - The office opened around 9:00 A.M. Some valuable volunteer help was on hand soon - a driver for the truck a woman to serve coffee, another woman with years of experience at first aid in a local mill and one with office management experience.

Guides, Rangers and Y Teens were contacted to help the Salvation Army sort and stack a huge load of clothing from Nanaimo. Separate depots were set up - lodging and groceries at the Welfare Office - clothing at Salvation Army Hall - furniture at the Community Hall - both the latter being supervised by Capt. Roed. The radio station was given messages to direct people to those places either to donate goods or receive them.

Three moving companies were asked to donate their services for Easter Monday to move articles to and from the depot to lodgings. One laundry offered free use of washing facilities - many people phoned to ask how they could help. Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Frenette and 2 workers from Nanaimo, Miss Morrison and Miss Palcasaar began compiling lists - one of offers of help or accommodation, one of those in need. We set about trying to correlate the two. Next day a card system was set up to facilitate this under Mrs. Hunt' s direction and later an extra phone line was installed, on Miss Jamieson' s request. The Health Nurse took one phone at the Civil Defence Headquarters.

It was decided to set up a special phone for volunteer services and capable women took turns manning this phone at Civil Defence Headquarters with the idea that those who could put in time as spare drivers, clothes sorters, coffee servers or on phones could list their numbers and be on call. Everywhere the requests for this kind of help which we sent out were readily answered.

From this point things seemed pretty well under control for the rest of the week - with extra staff arranged for and clothing, food and accommodation offered and information re reimbursement for losses being disseminated. The support received from officials of our own Department was wonderful and almost immediate. The staff coming from other offices was greatly appreciated.

P. Adang.

- - - - -

PART III

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That a local plan be prepared that sets forth the responsibilities, authority and lines of communication and control, and the means of co-ordination of local services in a disaster. Further, that a list of all emergency officials, showing their name, position and phone number or how they can be located, be prepared and available in strategic locations or offices.
2. A means of warning people in a disaster situation that would not be confused with the National Survival Attack Warning System. Factory hooters, volunteer fire department signal systems, large bells and loudspeakers were suggested - the device depending on the community and existing resources.
3. There was a considerable group of people who felt that the role of Civil Defence in natural and man-made disasters was not stressed enough, as many people mistakenly believed it only had a role and responsibility in a nuclear attack.

* * * * *