



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE PACIFIC REGION
PACIFIC GUARDIAN CENTER
737 BISHOP STREET, SUITE 2200
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3213

October 7, 2005

Honorable Senator Daniel K. Inouye
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Inouye:

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the letter of Mr. Barry Hirshorn, a Geophysicist and the National Weather Service Employees' Organization (NWSEO) Shop Steward at the Richard H. Hagemeyer Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (RHH-PTWC).

The current Ewa Beach site of the RHH-PTWC is in the tsunami inundation zone as defined by Hawaii State Civil Defense. The proposed Ford Island site for the NOAA Pacific Regional Center (PRC) is not. Therefore, the NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) believes that moving the RHH-PTWC to the PRC will provide a higher degree of safety for the people and decrease the threat of tsunami to the RHH-PTWC.

There are many benefits to be gained by co-location of the RHH-PTWC and associated equipment at the PRC on Ford Island. Some of the major benefits include:

- The RHH-PTWC would be located within a much safer and secure facility than NWS can provide at present. NWS spends considerable funds just to maintain the security of the perimeter of the property in Ewa Beach;
- Concentration of NOAA resources that will contribute to the maintenance and operation of the RHH-PTWC, rather than requiring them to "go it alone;"
- Opportunities for the RHH-PTWC to develop stronger relationships with other NOAA Line Offices, the public, and the University of Hawaii;
- Enhanced outreach and media relations; and
- Improve visibility to local, state, national, and international sectors.

These opportunities will improve the RHH-PTWC operations rather than detract from them.

NWS requires that two analysts be available to respond to alarms. We currently fulfill this requirement using standby duty, with two scientists working regular day shifts in the office but responding to alarms from their quarters at the RHH-PTWC site during off-hours. We are increasing our staff to ensure the RHH-PTWC will be manned around the clock, thus allowing the scientists to respond immediately, at all times. The scientists will be able to continuously monitor equipment, communications, and the general state of the RHH-PTWC. If problems arise, they will be able to initiate recall procedures



immediately if the problems are beyond the capability of the scientists on duty, rather than wait until they respond to an alarm and are confronted with a problem. Additionally, duty personnel will have the ability to call in more personnel, as required, to respond to alarms. These new capabilities will reduce the risk to the population of Hawaii and to all those dependent on the RHH-PTWC warnings.

NOAA has conducted electromagnetic studies to determine the feasibility of moving all the communications equipment from Ewa Beach to Ford Island. We are awaiting the final result of those studies, but the preliminary reports indicate that all equipment can be moved. Our plans include relocating the seismic vault to the PRC. Should any equipment remain at Ewa Beach, there are no technical issues that will prevent reliable and continuous operations for the RHH-PTWC.

Thank you for your interest in this matter. Should you have any additional questions, please contact me or my deputy, Mr. Ed Young, at (808) 532-6416.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. J. LaDouce', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

R. J. LaDouce
Director, NOAA/NWS
Pacific Region