Japan Tsunami Marine Debris

In March 2011, a massive earthquake struck off the coast of Japan, creating a devastating tsunami that traveled 217 square miles of coastline. The combined damage killed nearly 16,000 people and destroyed much of the shoreline.

When the tsunami wave retreated, it dragged rubble from buildings, people’s belongings, and infrastructure into the ocean.

- Consumer debris: bottles, bags, unmoored vessels, and even pianos washed away. The Government of Japan estimated that the tsunami swept about 5 million tons of debris into the ocean.
- Floating debris scattered across the entire North Pacific, which is exacerbated by winds and currents. Some of that debris has now traveled over 5,000 miles, serving as a reminder that marine debris is a global problem.

NOAA Marine Debris Program

The NOAA Marine Debris Program leads national and international efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris.

marine-debris.noaa.gov

How fast is the debris moving?

Marine Debris

- What happened to the debris?
- Where could the debris go in the future?
- What has been found?
- Debris Handling Guidelines
- Modeling
- Interagency Collaboration
- Marine Debris

The tsunami debris is not the only debris in the ocean.

Marine debris is an everyday problem.

- Recycling
- 2025 timeline
- San Diego Bay
- Debris的理由
- Addressing Public Concerns

Interagency Collaboration

- NOAA is leading efforts with federal, state, and local partners to coordinate information, collect data, assess the debris, and reduce available resources to harms the marine environment.

Collaborative response efforts are continuing as is the work to address concerns.

Addressing Public Concerns

- Highly unlikely that any debris holds harmful levels of radiation from the Fukushima nuclear emergency. Some items have been tested for impacted sites, and readings were normal.

- NOAA expects debris to still be visible for years to come. The debris will carry marine species, so it is important to take a disability view of the debris.

- Highly unlikely that any human remains from the 2011 tsunami will appear onshore. If you see something concerning, contact your local authorities.

Debris Handling Guidelines

- Use common sense and follow general safety guidelines. If you don’t know what a debris item is, don’t touch it and call professional help.
- Other typical marine debris items, such as gloves, plastic bottles, and cans, are encouraged to be collected. The items might be biodegradable or non-marine life attached. If you’re unsure, contact your local authorities. Marine debris can be reported.