

LOCAL NEWS

Tsunami's effect on Puerto Rico studied

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Civil Defense officials say they are studying how to deal with a tsunami, or massive tidal wave, that might hit southern Puerto Rico if a volcano on Montserrat erupts.

Officials were warned by two geologists at the University of Puerto Rico's

Mayaguez campus that an eruption of the island's Soufriere Hills volcano could trigger a tsunami as high as 17 feet on Puerto Rico's shores, said Angel Rodriguez, director of operations for the Civil Defense.

He said officials will meet this weekend and Monday to determine which low-lying areas might be affected by a

tsunami and if the Civil Defense should warn people in those areas of any danger.

The last time a major tsunami hit Puerto Rico was on Oct. 11, 1918, after an earthquake off the island's northwest coast leveled buildings in Mayaguez. The earthquake struck at about 10:30 a.m., and seconds later a 20-foot-high wall of water crashed into cities on the northwest coast,

killing 32 people.

Scientists have been watching the Montserrat volcano smoke and rattle for months and believe an explosion is imminent.

Rodriguez said the geologists called the possibility of a tsunami in Puerto Rico a "worst-case scenario," but warned that rescue workers should be ready.