

**‘Iliki ke kai i ka ‘ope‘ope lā, lilo;
i lilo no he hāwāwā.**

Literal Translation

**The sea snatches the bundle, it is gone;
It goes when one is not watchful.**

Interpretation

**A person who fails to watch out often loses.
Never turn your back on the sea.**

[‘Ōlelo No‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings by Mary Kawena Pukui]

This Hawaiian proverb is as important today as it was in the past. Here are some reasons: (1) tsunami warning sirens are not located in all of the remote coastal areas of our state; (2) some sirens may not work; (3) the sounds of sirens in some areas can be weaker than the sounds of heavy surf crashing onto reefs or into shoreline areas; and, (4) siren sounds can also be weaker than the sounds of strong winds in trees – especially ironwood trees.

Also, the proverb is important because in a local tsunami, shorelines closest to the source of the generated waves may not receive a warning in time - even if there is a siren in the area. The reason is that it may take more time to determine whether a tsunami is possible than it will take for the tsunami to strike those nearby coastal areas.

Please respect and appreciate the ancient Hawaiians who, with this proverb, hoped to save more lives in future generations than were tragically and needlessly lost in the past.

“Signs of a Tsunami”

If you are in a low lying coastal area and there is a working audible siren nearby, you will be warned of any dangerous tsunami generated by a distant earthquake. You should have at least 3 hours to move to higher ground. [Check you telephone book or Department of Emergency Management (or Civil Defense) websites for maps of evacuation zones.] If you are in a location where a working audible siren does not exist or if a locally generated tsunami has occurred, you may have only seconds or minutes to save your life and the lives of others. **If you observe any of the following “signs of a tsunami”, evacuate as quickly and safely as possible to higher ground.**

- **As a tsunami enters shallower ocean depths, its height will begin to increase and it may appear as a narrow but extensive “shadow” moving rapidly towards the shoreline.**
- **You might be able to see or hear a tsunami as it hits reefs or adjacent coastlines with more energy than normal surf.**
- **Tsunamis are actually a series of waves, so the first wave may not be the largest. If you are lucky, the first wave will be like a small flood moving inland further and over a much longer period of time than a normal wave.**
- **If you are unlucky, the first wave of some locally generated tsunamis may be more powerful than the earlier waves of a distant tsunami.**
- **The first indication of a tsunami might be a withdrawal of the shoreline, exposing much more of the sea floor over a much longer period of time than normal waves.**
- **Although most felt earthquakes do not generate tsunamis, the very largest felt earthquakes have resulted in deadly tsunamis on the Big Island.**
- **For a significant number of potentially deadly, locally generated tsunamis, no earthquakes were felt.**
- **If you feel an earthquake, make no assumption about its location or that a siren will give you a timely warning. Move as quickly and safely as possible to higher ground. Historical data indicates that rare but deadly tsunamis on islands other than the Big Island have occurred.**