

Extreme tides flood Marshalls capital

February 21 2011



Two local residents waded through flooding caused by high ocean tides in low-lying parts of Majuro Atoll, the capital of the Marshall Islands. Extreme high tides have flooded parts of the low-lying Marshall Islands capital Majuro with a warning Sunday of worse to come because of rising sea levels.

Extreme high tides have flooded parts of the low-lying Marshall Islands capital Majuro with a warning Sunday of worse to come because of rising sea levels.

Several areas of the city were flooded Saturday and forecasters predicted more to come on Sunday evening before the current high tide levels ease.

Flooding of the [Marshall Islands](#) atolls, many of which rise less than a metre (three feet) above sea level, will increase in "frequency and magnitude" in the coming years, University of Hawaii marine researcher Murray Ford said.

Ford, who is studying [rising sea levels](#) in the Marshall islands, said the weekend's extreme tides of 1.67 metres were exacerbated by La Nina, a [weather phenomenon](#) that has caused the base sea level to rise by 15 centimetres (six inches) in recent months.

"As the sea level is temporarily higher as a result of La Nina and overlies long-term [sea level rise](#), the impacts are magnified," Ford said.

"While these events happen only a handful of times a year at present they will continue to increase in both frequency and magnitude."

Ford said a gauge measuring long-term sea level changes at Majuro indicated the "average sea level is more than six inches above predicted" levels.

The Marshall Islands, a collection of coral atolls and islands, announced plans late last year to build a wall to hold back rising sea levels around Majuro which is home to nearly half of the country's 55,000 population.

Overcrowding in the urban centre have forced people to build homes within a couple of metres of the shore, increasing their exposure to flooding during peak tide periods.

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Citation: Extreme tides flood Marshalls capital (2011, February 21) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-extreme-tides-marshalls-capital.html>

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