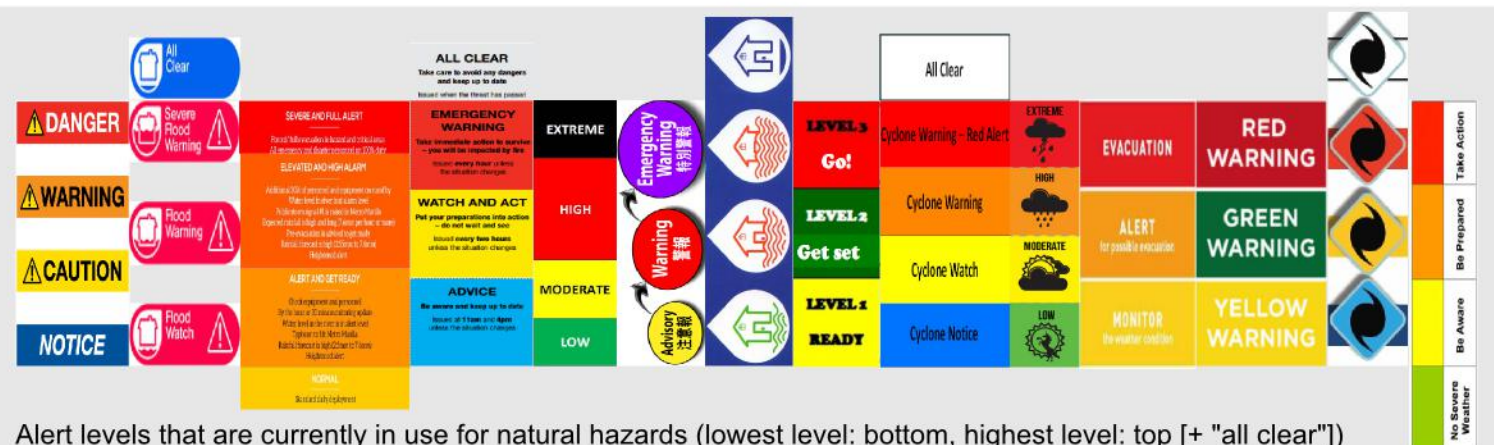


Harmonisation of Early Warning Alert Levels



Alert levels that are currently in use for natural hazards (lowest level: bottom, highest level: top [+ "all clear"])

The public awareness and understanding of early warning alert messages is often compromised by the high variety of schemes, colour codes and pictograms. The growing importance of international business and trade, record high tourist arrivals as well as increased labour migration call not only for national, but also internationally harmonised warning schemes. Investments in early warning systems have improved the detection of approaching extreme natural events significantly in the past years, however, the wide range of warning schemes makes it difficult to disseminate the warning and initiate an effective evacuation and adequate response.

Therefore, it is deemed necessary that warning messages follow consistent colour codes (e.g. green, yellow, orange, red, for increasing dangers, followed by blue for an „all clear“ status) and pictograms. Alert levels in a standardised system will be quickly recognised by the public such as the traffic lights scheme has demonstrated in many countries worldwide. Confusion would be further reduced if multi-hazard early warning systems follow the same numbers of alert levels for different hazards. The alert levels may have different threshold in the respective countries.

Alert Level	General Advice for the Public	Flood	Storm	Tsunami	Volcano	Tornado	Landslide	Avalanche	Wild Fire
1	ADVICE Be aware and keep up to date								
2	ALERT Put slow preparations into action								
3	WATCH & ACT Put final preparations into action								
4	EMERGENCY Take immediate action to survive								
All Clear	NO MORE DANGER								

Proposed alert levels for natural hazards (example for illustration purposes only)

There is a need for a standardised system for each alert level (e.g. four steps with the same meaning and colour code), although specific operational procedures can vary locally.

In order to simplify and harmonize alert levels it is advisable to also include standard symbols and signs for disaster prone areas, evacuation routes and evacuation centres.

At the moment a wide range of designs is displayed in different countries and localities that are often not clearly indicate the level of danger for visitors and also residents.

Countries with diverse numeral systems can display two numbers on their symbols.



These signs show a Warning Level 2 for storm with Hindu Arabic numerals on the right side and Eastern Arabic and Burmese numerals on the left side.



ISO standard for high risk tsunami zones, evacuation routes and safe places. It is not widely used across nations.



For further information please contact:

Olaf Neussner
Disaster Risk Management Specialist
e: neussner@arken-consulting.com
t: 0063 917 3207688
skype: olafneussner
www.arken-consulting.com

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Contact Person: Stephan Huppertz, Regional Coordinator Asia, Global Initiative Disaster Risk Management, GIZ | Email: stephan.huppertz@giz.de | Phone: + 66 (0)2 288 15 75