

The Storm

After Reading

1. Tsunami



A tsunami (pronounced soo-nahm-ee) is a series of huge waves that happen after an undersea disturbance, such as an earthquake or volcano eruption. (Tsunami is from the Japanese word for harbour wave.) The waves travel in all directions from the area of disturbance, much like the ripples that happen after throwing a rock into a pool of water. The waves may travel in the open sea as fast as 600 kilometres per hour. As the big waves approach shallow waters along the coast they grow to a great height and smash into the shore. They can be as high as 35 metres. They can cause a lot of destruction on the shore. They are sometimes mistakenly called "tidal waves," but tsunami have nothing to do with the tides.

Now read this eye witness report of the tsunami that hit a number of countries around the Indian Ocean on December 26 2004, killing over 220,000 people.

But then we saw the wall. At first - way out at sea. But wait. If you blinked your eyes - it changed positions really fast. Really fast. And then we could see it was moving too fast. For a few seconds, everyone was mesmerised by the wall. And the sound. And then, with a snap of a finger, hundreds were popped out of their hypnosis - and people started to walk, and then run. And soon, everyone started to scream. "Get up on the wall!" some shouted.



With only a few stairs going up the concrete wall - everyone headed for a distant spot on the beach. And some thought it would be ok if you just got up on the wall.

The water filled up the beach like a gorging bathtub. Water came at the people at 250 kph - and no matter how hard you tried, unless you were close to the wall - you couldn't outrun it.

The water came in fast. Some people stumbled. Some held their ground or were swept with the water towards the wall. People sputtered and coughed.

The water spilled over the road.

Some people went down - and most were in shock to have seen such a thing happen. But that was only the beginning. And while many people were able to stand back up again -

bruised and battered, having had all of their clothing ripped off by such a fast and overwhelming wave - it wasn't over.

The second - and most deadly swell came. And this one was the life-taking swell. Larger. Fiercer. Taller by over 3 metres - this one just came so strongly and pushed everything in its path towards the town. People were like leaves being swept along. This swell pushed all of the 200 cars on the beach forward. It pushed hundreds of parked motorcycles and tuk tuks. It pushed over the two buses parked in front of the diving shop - waiting to take divers out to their morning dive.

It pushed hard and strong. Everything was pushed into the first row of hotels and shops lining the beach. The swirls first broke open window and doors and washing out every stick of furniture - every bed - every suitcase stacked in a corner. Tables and chair of restaurants were sluiced out. And then the room space was filled with larger items. Vehicles were thrown against buildings. Where there was a bed was now a car. Or mangled motorcycles. The Coca-cola truck delivering morning soda was picked up and thrown into the side of a bank, wedging it so tight into the lobby that four vehicles the next day would be needed to pull it out. Boats on the ocean were thrown into the tops of tall palm trees on the beach.

The water weaved its way for 4 blocks inland - getting caught like a guided stream between banks of buildings. The force pushed between the buildings, rising over 3 metres down perpendicular roads to the beach - again, washing out everything on the ground floor.

And the people? Few had a real chance. If you could swim - and managed to follow the wave - you might have had a chance. But even if you could swim, the items being thrown with you - above you - under you - battered you. Glass from many of the store front windows flowed silently, hidden in the water, and cut people.

There are a lot of descriptive words used in this piece. Use the underlined words in the text to complete the sentences below.

1. When her head came out of the wave she _____ as she tried to take air.
2. Everyone was so _____ with what they saw that they couldn't move.
3. He _____ his eyes in disbelief at what he was seeing.
4. The beach was covered in stones so many people _____ as they ran.
5. The wall couldn't contain the wave and the water _____ over into the town.
6. She was _____ by heavy objects hidden under the surface of the water, one breaking her leg.
7. A sheet of razor-edged metal _____ his arm deeply.
8. The force of the wave _____ every single thing in the bathroom, including the toilet seat.
9. The water was forced up through the streets and _____ its way around the buildings.
10. The wave approached the beach turning it into a life-threatening _____.



2. Floods at home

In the UK, floods seem to be more common now than they used to be. The Environment Agency (a government body) has issued the following guide to people to protect their homes in the case of flooding.

In the original document, the advice was grouped in 5 categories:

1. Gas, electricity and water
2. Reduce flood water getting into your home
3. Furniture and appliances
4. Personal items
5. Outside the house

Look at the following list, and put each item into the correct category.

Simple ways to protect your home from flooding

Simple steps

Follow the checklist below to ensure you have taken the most basic steps in protecting your home from flooding.

- Ideally, cover doors, windows and airbricks with plywood, sandbags or metal sheeting.
- If there is no time to remove curtains, hang them up over the rail so they are kept above flood water
- If you can, roll up carpets and rugs and put them upstairs
- Keep important personal documents in a sealed bag, and in a location safe from floodwater
- Leave internal doors open, or ideally, remove them and store them upstairs
- Move anything not fixed down into a safer location, e.g. dustbins, garden chemicals car oil and similar
- Move as much furniture and electrical items as you can upstairs. Alternatively raise them up on bricks or blocks - this may be very helpful for large appliances such as fridge/freezers
- Move furniture away from walls, as this helps when drying your property later
- Move your car to higher ground to avoid damage
- Put plugs into sinks and weigh them down with something heavy
- Silicone sealant - open doors and windows, smear a layer of this around the frame, then shut and lock the door/window.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies at the mains. Find out where these are well in advance of any flood
- Unplug all electrical items and store upstairs or as high up as possible
- Weigh down manhole covers outside the house to prevent them floating away and leaving a hazardous hole
- You cannot replace sentimental items. Think about permanently moving these upstairs, so you do not forget to move them in the case of a flood