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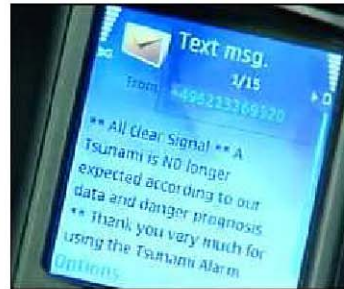
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Global tsunami alerts via mobile text messages

By Farah Abdul Rahim, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 22 June 2006 2045 hrs

Some German professors have launched a system to warn subscribers of an impending tsunami, wherever they are, via a mobile text message.



The inventors say such a system could prevent tragedies like the 2004 Asian tsunami.

Killer waves swept across many parts of Asia from Indonesia to India on December 26, 2004, turning the tsunami into one of the deadliest natural disasters in recent times.

About 200,000 people died, with nearly 50,000 missing.

The tsunami alarm system picks up seismic signals from global stations and consolidates the information.

If there is a danger of a tsunami, an alarm is sent out to subscribers via an SMS.

Professor Dr Eduard Heindl, an inventor of the tsunami alarm system, said: "Last December in Japan, we had an earthquake with a tsunami generated and we sent a warning 10 minutes before radio stations in Japan were able to disseminate this information.

"Fortunately, the wave was not disastrous, about 3 metres high. The thing is that people always keep their mobile phones alive. The radio may not always be switched on, if you use radio. But your mobile phone is always on.

"So we have a much wider chance to alert people than any other technique. That's the idea of the mobile phone, as we have millions using the mobile phones at beach areas today."

The take-up rate for the tsunami alarm system has been good among travellers in Europe.

Inventors hope that this system will catch on in Asia, especially in coastal areas bordering the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Professor Dr Wolfram Reiners, another inventor of the tsunami alarm system, said: "The tsunami alarm system for mobile phones is complementary to the public warning systems. Both of them work in tandem to give maximum protection. People are cautious about public warning systems due to a lot of false alarms and public alarm systems are not available everywhere."

But the tsunami alert system via mobile phones is not free.

A year's subscription costs about \$60 (US\$40).

Holidaymakers can also subscribe to a monthly subscription of \$20 dollars (US\$12.50).

They can go online to do so at <http://www.tsunami-alarm-system.com>.

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