

# Tsunami!

## Early Morning Terror

It was the year 365 A.D. The sun had come up over Alexandria in Egypt. Then the ground began to shake. People woke all over the city. It was an earthquake.

When it stopped, people walked outside. They walked to the sea. They noticed something strange. The water had pulled back far into the sea! Boats were stuck in sand. Fish and other sea creatures were laying on the seafloor.

People began to grab the fish. They were excited at the easy catch. There were plenty of fish to eat.

Then something horrible happened. The water from the sea came back. It was rushing toward people very fast. People tried to run, but it was too late. Giant waves crashed over the people, killing them.

The giant waves rushed over the city. Many buildings were destroyed. The giant waves pushed ships two miles inland. Thousands of people died. What was this terrible disaster? It was a tsunami (tsoo-NAH-mee).

## What Is a Tsunami?

A tsunami is a chain of large ocean waves. These waves are started by an underwater earthquake. The earthquake “pulls” the water away from land. Then the water rushes back to land in large waves. Tsunamis can destroy homes near oceans and seas. People can drown in the force of their waves.



The word *tsunami* is a Japanese word. It means “harbor wave.” Japan is an island surrounded by water. It has had many tsunamis.

## Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004

In 2004, a strong earthquake shook beneath the Indian Ocean. Then huge waves spread across the ocean. The waves destroyed cities and towns in many countries. Indonesia, an island in Asia, was hit the worst. Some of the waves were more than 30 feet high. In all, more than 230,000 people died.

Many people came to help after the disaster. They helped rebuild homes and buildings. Other countries gave money and food. People are still trying to fix some places ruined by the tsunami.

After the terrible tsunami of 2004, scientists around the world helped make a tsunami warning system for the Indian Ocean. Hopefully with more warning, fewer people will be hurt or killed by giant waves.