

Tsunamis Around the World

Fact Cards



Tsunamis Around the World Fact Cards

Location: Japan

Year: 2011

At 2:46p.m. on March 11th, a powerful tsunami, travelling 800km per hour with 10m high waves, swept over the east coast of Japan, killing more than 18,000 people. The tsunami was produced by an 9.0 magnitude earthquake that reached down as far as 24.4km. It was the fourth-largest earthquake ever recorded. In places, the tsunami waves reached as far as 10km inland and entire towns virtually disappeared.

Japan has the longest-recorded history of tsunamis. Roughly 452,000 people were moved to shelters from their destroyed homes. The violent shaking resulted in a nuclear emergency, in which the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant began leaking radioactive steam. The World Bank estimated that it could take Japan up to five years to financially overcome the damage caused.

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Location: Sumatra, Indonesia

Year: 2004

This Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami was the most devastating of its kind in modern times, killing 230,000 people in 14 countries. The fault zone that caused the tsunami was roughly 1300km long, vertically displacing the sea floor by several metres along that length. The tsunami was as tall as 50 metres, reaching 5km inland near Meubolah, Sumatra. It was the third largest earthquake ever recorded, had the longest duration ever observed (8.3 - 10 minutes) and caused the entire planet to vibrate.

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Location: Alaska

Year: 1958

The Lituya Bay tsunami in Alaska was caused by a landslide falling into a fjord. It produced the largest waves ever seen, at 524 metres high. It flattened vegetation up to 500 metres above sea level. The effects of this tsunami were fairly localised.

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Location: Italy

Year: 1908

The Messina earthquake and tsunami took around 123,000 lives in Sicily and Calabria, southern Italy. The major cities of Messina and Reggio Calabria were almost completely destroyed.

Location: Sanriku, Japan

Year: 1896

On 15th June, a tsunami was created after a 7.6 magnitude earthquake near Sanriku, Japan. The tsunami was reported to have reached a height of 38.2 metres. It caused damage to more than 11,000 homes and killed around 22,000 people. Reports have also been found that claim the same tsunami reached the east coast of China and killed around 4000 people.

Location: Krakatau, Indonesia

Year: 1883

This tsunami on August 27th was linked to the explosion of the Krakatau caldera volcano. Waves as high as 37 metres were created by the eruptions and destroyed the towns of Anjer and Merak. This event caused around 40,000 deaths in total.

Location: Northern Chile

Year: 1868

On 13th August, a tsunami was caused by two large earthquakes of about 8.5 magnitude. The waves affected the whole Pacific Rim, with waves described being up to 21 metres high, which lasted between two and three days. The Arica tsunami was registered by six tide gauges, as far off as Sydney, Australia. This disaster caused around 25,000 deaths in total.

Location: Italy

Year: 1783

The Calabrian earthquakes were a sequence of five strong earthquakes that hit the region of Calabria, producing two tsunamis. Between 32,000 and 50,000 people died during this earthquake.

Location: Ryuku Islands, Japan

Year: 1771

On 24th April, a 7.4 magnitude earthquake was thought to have caused a tsunami that damaged a large number of islands. The most severe damage was to Ishigaki and Miyako Islands. It is commonly claimed that the waves were 85.4m high. However, this may be a recording error made when converting old measurements to new measurements. It is now accepted that the waves were 11 to 15 metres high. The tsunami ruined 3,137 homes and caused about 12,000 human deaths.

Location: Lisbon, Portugal

Year: 1755

On 1st November, a magnitude 8.5 earthquake caused three enormous waves to hit towns along the west coast of Portugal and southern Spain. They were reported to be up to 30 metres high. The tsunami affected waves as far away as Carlisle Bay, Barbados, where waves were said to rise by 1.5 metres. The disaster caused the death of 60,000 people in the Portugal, Morocco and Spain.

Location: Nankaido, Japan

Year: 1707

On 28th October, a magnitude 8.4 earthquake caused sea waves as high as 25 metres to hit the coasts of Kyushyu, Shikoku and Honshin. Osaka was also damaged. Nearly 30,000 buildings were damaged and about 30,000 people died. It was reported that about 12 large waves were counted between 3pm and 4pm. Some of the waves reached several kilometres inland at Kochi.

Location: Ise Bay, Japan

Year: 1586

On 18th January, an earthquake of approximate magnitude 8.2 caused the Ise Bay tsunami. The waves reached as high as 6 metres. It is reported that Lake Biwa flooded a town, destroying everything except for the castle. The Ise Bay tsunamis caused more than 8000 deaths and huge amounts of damage.

Location: Enshunada Sea, Japan

Year: 1498

On 20th September, an earthquake estimated to have been at least magnitude 8.3 caused tsunami waves along the coasts of Kii, Mikawa, Surugu, Izu and Sagami. The waves were powerful and there were reports of homes flooding and being swept away. More than 31,000 people were killed.