

East Coast tsunamis maps to be created

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Two University of Rhode Island scientists have been awarded an \$86,000 grant to create tsunami warning maps of the East Coast of the United States.

The maps -- funded a grant by FM Global, the world's largest commercial property insurer -- will identify potential flooding and damage that could occur if a tsunami struck the region.

Ocean engineering professors Stephan Grilli and Christopher Baxter of Cranston will study historical events and evaluate the risks and probabilities of a tsunami striking anywhere the East Coast, from the Carolinas to Maine.

Baxter and Grilli said tsunami hazard maps have been in existence for the West Coast and Hawaii for several years, but none have been made for the East Coast. They said that's partly because there is a lower risk for tsunamis in the Atlantic, but also because they're more complicated to predict in the Atlantic.

A tsunami in the Pacific Ocean would likely be caused by an underwater earthquake, Grilli said. Tsunamis in the Atlantic are more likely to be caused by underwater landslides near the continental shelf, and predicting how large a wave that would generate is very difficult.

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