

# Study may lead to better tsunami forecasts

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Better tsunami forecasting may result from a seafloor inspection near the epicenter of the earthquake that caused last year's Indian Ocean tsunami.

The first research expedition to directly observe the seafloor area involved an international team of 27 scientists, led by Kate Moran of the University of Rhode Island and David Tappin of the British Geological Survey.

The scientists spent 17 days at sea last May exploring the seafloor off the coast of Sumatra. The team reported discovering far fewer underwater landslides and generally less widespread disturbance of the seafloor than they would have been expected, given the size of the earthquake.

"That might mean that we're safer than we realize, because the material in that environment might be dissipating the seismic energy more than we thought," Moran said.

The expedition's findings were reported this week, during the fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco.

Primary funding for the research expedition was provided by the BBC and the Discovery Channel. A documentary about the expedition will air on both channels Dec. 18.

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