

Indonesia says avoid coast near volcano, fearing new tsunami

December 26 2018, by Niniek Karmini



Volunteers clean the debris at a school following the tsunami in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed more than 420 people last weekend in a fresh warning

issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami.

The big waves that followed the eruption of Anak Krakatoa, or "Child of Krakatoa" island volcano, hit communities along the Sunda Strait on Saturday night. The eruption is believed to have set off a large landslide on the volcano, either on its slope or underwater, displacing the water that slammed into Java and Sumatra islands.

Indonesia's Meteorology, Geophysics and Climatology Agency asked people late Tuesday to stay at least 500 meters (1,640 feet) and up to 1 kilometer (less than a mile) from the coastline along the strait, which lies between the two main islands. Government workers were monitoring Anak Krakatoa's eruptions and high waves and heavy rain were possible Wednesday, said agency head Dwikorita Karnawati.

"All these conditions could potentially cause landslides at the cliffs of the crater into the sea, and we fear that that could trigger a tsunami," she said at a news conference. She asked that communities remain vigilant and not to panic.

The tsunami struck without warning, taking people by surprise even in a country familiar with seismic disaster. No big earthquake shook the ground beforehand, and it hit at night on a holiday weekend while people were enjoying concerts and other beach and resort activities.



Volunteer clean the debris on the street following the tsunami in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

It was a sharp contrast to the disaster that struck 14 years ago off the western coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island. An enormous 9.1 magnitude earthquake rocked the area the morning after Christmas, creating gigantic waves that surged far inland swallowing everything in their path. The wall of water killed some 230,000 people in a dozen countries, more than half in Indonesia's Aceh province.

The devastation was vast, and the disaster was among the worst witnessed in recent history. Saturday's event, coupled with an earthquake and tsunami in Sulawesi in September on Sulawesi that killed at least 2,100 people, triggered flashbacks for some who survived the 2004 tragedy.

"When it happens, I always remember what we have been through," said Qurnaty, 54, who uses only one name and lost her home and several family members to the waves in the hard-hit provincial capital of Banda Aceh. She prayed with surviving family members at a mass grave there on Wednesday's anniversary. "Every time I see them (on TV), I feel really, really sad. All we can do from here is to pray for them."

Though recovery was slow, some victims of the latest tsunami said they remember the resilience of the Acehnese people, which gives them hope that they too can rebuild their homes and their lives.



Volunteers clean the debris on a street following the tsunami in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

"I am scared, I am traumatized by the tsunami that I only knew before from the news. Now I know how horrifying a tsunami is," said Kusmiati, who uses only one name. Her face was still bruised and her legs swollen after she and her husband managed to survive being hit and dragged under by the waves after fleeing a beach villa in Carita, where they were working.

Beaches were largely empty in the area, which is typically crammed with tourists, and police patrolled on motorbikes warning people to stay away from the coast. Some residents defied the order, returning to what was left of their homes to begin cleaning up as heavy rain fell and waves pounded the shore.

"I am still afraid that the tsunami will return, so when dark comes, I stay at a temporary shelter on the hill," said Rohayati, who worked to salvage what was left of her battered house, 300 meters (985 feet) from the sea. "I hope the government can provide a tsunami warning, like a siren, for people living in coastal areas so we can be alerted of a potential tsunami and have time to save ourselves."

The country's system of tsunami detection buoys—deployed after the 2004 disaster—has not worked since 2012, with some units being stolen or vandalized.



A woman stands near debris at a tsunami-ravaged area in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

Karnawati, of the meteorology agency, said that because the tsunami was caused by volcanic activity, it would not have been picked up by the system's seafloor sensors, which monitor movement from conventional earthquakes responsible for most of Indonesia's tsunamis.

Residents of Sumur village, which has been slow to receive aid due to roads being cut off, remained stunned by how quickly the tsunami hit. The beach, located just a few kilometers (miles) from the tourist island of Umang near Java's western tip, is popular for snorkeling and other water activities. The tsunami decimated the area, ripping houses from

their foundations and bulldozing concrete buildings.

Scientists have said the waves were recorded in several places at about 1 meter (3.3 feet) high, but Sumur residents insisted they towered more than 3 meters (10 feet), possibly as high as 5 meters (16.4 feet), which the government's disaster agency also confirmed in some areas.

"There was no sign of a tsunami when we were at the beach. The sea didn't recede," said Tati Hayati, who was enjoying a pleasant evening with 10 other people when the disaster hit. "It was calm and bright with the full moon."



A women stand inside destroyed house at a tsunami-ravaged area in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

When she spotted high, fast-moving waves launching toward the shore, she ran to her car and managed to get inside. But she couldn't outrun it. She said the car was struck by three waves, breaking out the back window and filling the vehicle with gushing water.

"We were locked inside. The car was swaying in the waves and we thought we would all die," Hayati said. "We almost could not breathe and I almost gave up when I groped the key in the water and managed to open the door, and the water began to recede. We got out of the car and ran to safety."

More than 21,000 people were displaced from their homes and heavy equipment was urgently needed in the Sumur subdistrict near Ujung Kulon National Park to help get aid flowing and reach people who may be injured or trapped, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for Indonesia's Disaster Mitigation Agency.

The death toll was 429, with more than 1,400 people injured and at least 128 missing, he said.



Volunteers clean the debris on the sea following the tsunami in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

Anak Krakatau formed in the early 20th century near the site of the cataclysmic 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, which killed more than 30,000 people and hurled so much ash that it turned day to night in the area and reduced global temperatures.

Anak Krakatau has been erupting since June and did so again 24 minutes before the [tsunami](#), according to the geophysics agency.



A man stands near the sea in Carita, Indonesia, Wednesday, Dec. 26, 2018. Indonesian authorities asked people to avoid the coast in areas where a tsunami killed hundreds of people last weekend in a fresh warning issued on the anniversary of the catastrophic 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

© 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Indonesia says avoid coast near volcano, fearing new tsunami (2018, December 26) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-12-indonesia-coast-volcano-tsunami.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.