

Destruction

A big tsunami can destroy almost anything in its path. In an instant, whole areas of homes, farms and factories may be ruined. Many animals and people may be drowned under metres of water, or carried up to a kilometre inland. Cars, trains, boats, buses, shattered buildings and bridges are carried inland at high speed, like missiles. They may crush other things in their way.

The whole of a coastline may be altered by a tsunami. The seawater may flood large areas of low-lying land, ruining farmers' **crops**. Trees, other plants and soil are sometimes stripped from the land, and the sucking action of the wave train may shift whole beaches.

Tsunamis can cause horrific devastation. Whole cities were flattened as a result of the Indian Ocean tsunami in late December 2004. This was the city of Banda Aceh in Indonesia.



After the waves

When a tsunami is over, daily life does not return to normal for some time. Many people, such as fishermen with broken boats, cannot earn money because they cannot work. Children may not be able to go to school. There are many health hazards. Drinking water and **sewage** get mixed with seawater when pipes are snapped and **reservoirs** broken. People may then drink **polluted** water containing germs that will make them ill. Many are at risk of **electrocution** from damaged **powerlines**. Sometimes gas that leaks from broken pipes explodes.

When the seawater drains away, massive amounts of **debris** left on land have to be cleared up. Some debris comes from collapsed buildings or trees. Other debris is from the ocean – tsunamis pick up tonnes of sand, coral, rock and fish as they approach land.



After a tsunami, there is often a stench from piles of rotting fish dumped on land.