

Media Availability

January 21, 2005

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Local Scientist to Share Tsunami Experiences

What: A media availability to discuss the experiences and science involved in the aftermath of a devastating tsunami with a local U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) scientist. Dr. Robert Morton, a research geologist at the USGS Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies in St. Petersburg, Fla., traveled with an international scientific team to Sri Lanka to capture technical data from the devastating tsunami of December 26 in the Indian Ocean. Several teams of tsunami and earthquake engineering experts were assembled and dispatched by the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI). Morton was abroad with the reconnaissance team from January 7-16, returning to the office January 19. The USGS shares a common interest with scientists around the world to reduce the devastating effects of earthquakes and tsunamis on society. The goal of the USGS is to help improve the world's scientific knowledge of these events so measures can be taken to reduce the effects of future earthquakes and tsunamis.

Topic: Morton and the EERI teams gathered data on estimated wave heights, extent of inundation, geological scouring, flow direction, and other information related to the physical aspects of the tsunamis that may disappear quickly. Currently Morton's research focuses on geological changes associated with tsunamis and hurricanes. During his experience abroad, Morton gained a better understanding of how the tsunami affected the landscape so he can compare tsunami landscape-change to changes caused by hurricanes.

Additionally, scientists who specialize in coastal habitats (i.e., coral reefs and mangroves) will be able to answer questions about the unique roles these habitats play in protecting coastal areas during coastal hazards.

Where: U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
Center for Coastal and Watershed Studies
600 Fourth Street South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

When: Monday, January 24, 2005, from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

The USGS offers a unique combined scientific expertise in earth and biological science, including such specialties as oceanography, marine geology, and seismology. The St. Petersburg Center investigates scientific processes related to societal problems arising in coastal and marine environments, including natural hazards, resources, and environmental change.

The USGS serves the nation by providing reliable scientific information to describe and understand the Earth; minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; and enhance and protect our quality of life.

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