

**PRESS RELEASE**

18 October 2005

**Top Scientists Discuss Latest Research on  
Tsunami Hazards at BHRC Workshop**

Benfield Hazard Research Centre (BHRC) today hosted its latest one-day City workshop in association with the Under 35s Reinsurance Group entitled '*Tsunamis: Past Events and Future Risk*'. The event drew together some of the leading tsunami scientists in the UK who gave presentations on contemporary issues in tsunami science, including current thinking on tsunami hazard and risk, to an audience of over 50 delegates from the re/insurance industry and academia.

"The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 26<sup>th</sup> 2004 shook the hazard and risk science community. More than 200,000 lives were lost and recent estimates put the total economic cost at US\$15 billion. This event should not, however, be treated as unique, and major tsunamis can occur anywhere on the planet at any time. Two hundred and fifty years ago next month, for example, the great Lisbon earthquake triggered devastating tsunamis that took thousands of lives in Europe and North Africa and crossed the Atlantic Basin to the Caribbean," commented Professor Bill McGuire, Benfield Professor of Geohazards and Director of the Benfield Hazard Research Centre, who was one of the speakers at the event.

"This latest one-day workshop was designed to bring re/insurance professionals and other delegates up to date with current thinking on tsunami hazard and risk in the light of the Indian Ocean event," he added.

Topics and speakers on the day included:

- **Introducing Tsunami:** Extreme events such as the Indian Ocean tsunami are fortunately rare. They can, however, be utilised to increase our understanding of natural Earth processes that can be used downstream to develop our understanding of hazard and risk. (*Dr. David Tappin, British Geological Survey*)
- **The Indian Ocean Tsunami: impacts and lessons:** The Boxing Day tsunami killed 230,000 people from 57 countries and caused total economic loss estimates of more than 11 billion US Dollars. A UK Earthquake Engineering Field Investigation Team examined the impact on, and vulnerability of, local buildings to the tsunami forces and their lifeline infrastructures. (*Dr. Tiziana Rossetto, BHRC*)
- **Tsunamis Down-under:** Examines the impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami on buildings and other structures, and assesses the risk from tsunami in the southern hemisphere. (*Professor Russell Blong, Benfield Australia*)
- **Volcanic Tsunamis: Past, Present and Future:** Island and coastal volcanoes are a common source of tsunamis large enough to cause major loss of life and severe destruction, either locally or at oceanic distances. (*Professor Bill McGuire, BHRC*)



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- **The Storegga Slide Tsunami: A Major Pre-historic Tsunami in the UK:** Around 8,000 years ago, a great tsunami generated by submarine sliding on the Continental Shelf and Slope occurred off the coast of South-West Norway. Evidence from this event – known as the Storegga Slide - can provide information about the detailed impact of these phenomena. *(Professor David Smith, University of Oxford)*
- **Landslide Tsunamis in the North Atlantic: Prospects for Another Storegga:** There is strong evidence for submarine landslides of a wide variety of sizes around the North Atlantic. Recent studies have shown that such landslides are an integral part of continental slope development particularly in mid to high latitude areas. *(Dr. David Long, British Geological Survey)*
- **The Threat Posed by Tsunamis to the UK:** Evidence that tsunamis have reached the UK in the past indicates that the possibility of significant future events cannot be dismissed. *(Dr. Brian Baptie, British Geological Survey)*
- **Engineering Tools for Tsunami Risk Assessment:** A number of tools are available to model tsunami generation, propagation and inundation, while the use of risk based methodologies in risk assessment for flooding events can also be applied to tsunami risk assessment. *(Dr. Jane Smallman, HR Wallingford)*

-ENDS-

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Benfield Hazard Research Centre:**

With sixty researchers and practitioners, Benfield Hazard Research Centre is Europe's leading multidisciplinary academic hazard research centre. BHRC comprises three groups: Geological Hazards, Meteorological Hazards & Seasonal Forecasting, and Disaster Studies & Management. The Centre is based at University College London, one of the world's leading universities and, along with Oxford and Cambridge, one of the UK's top three multi-faculty teaching and research institutions. [www.benfieldhrc.org](http://www.benfieldhrc.org)

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