



AS IT IS

Investigators Look for Answers to Southern Ocean Earthquakes

December 06, 2021

Some of the strongest earthquakes in the world come from the ocean floor south of Australia. The area is called the Southern Ocean.

Researchers placed 27 instruments known as seismometers on the ocean floor to find out why. Some of them were over 5 kilometers below the water surface.

The instruments have been recording earthquakes for the last year and are now being picked up. It will take three weeks to get them all.

A professor from the Australian National University's School of Earth Sciences hopes the information will give more data on how and why earthquakes happen.

Hrvoje Tkalčić said more information about how and when earthquakes happen might help scientists predict how far **seismic** waves will travel afterward. The information could be useful to warn about strong highwater events called **tsunamis**.

He said scientists will not be able to predict earthquakes or how large they will be, but the project will help them understand the structure of the earth in the **volatile** area.

The research tools spent the last year pointed toward the center of the Earth. Scientists think the information they get will help people in Australia and New Zealand prepare for tsunamis. That area of the world is known as the "Pacific Ring of Fire" because there is so much seismic activity.

California Institute of Technology, The University of Cambridge in England and other Australian universities worked on the project. They hope the information can be applied to other oceans.

I'm Dan Friedell.

Phil Mercer wrote this story for VOA. Dan Friedell adapted it for Learning English. Susan Shand was the editor.

Do you worry about tsunamis? What about earthquakes? Tell us in the Comments Section and visit our Facebook page.

Words in This Story

tsunami – n. a very high, large wave in the ocean that is usually caused by an earthquake under the sea and that can cause great destruction when it reaches land

volatile – adj. likely to become dangerous or out of control

seismic – adj. of, relating to, or caused by an earthquake