

Schoolgirl saved family and others by recognizing signs of coming tsunami:

LONDON - A British schoolgirl who recognized the signs of a coming tsunami thanks to a recent geography lesson saved her family and some 100 other tourists at a Thai beach, a British newspaper reported.

Tilly Smith, 10, realized they were in danger when she saw the tide suddenly rush out -an indication earthquake-driven tidal waves are only minutes away -and told her mother, The Sun said in its Saturday edition.

She explained that she had studied tsunamis only two weeks before at her school in Oxshott, just south of London. Her parents, Penny and Colin Smith, warned nearby vacationers and staff at their hotel in Phuket, and the hotel swiftly evacuated Maikhao beach, minutes before the devastating waves struck, the newspaper said.

The Sun reported that the beach was one of only a few in Phuket where no one was killed or seriously hurt.

"I was on the beach and the water started to go funny," Tilly was quoted as telling The Sun. "There were bubbles and the tide went out all of a sudden. I recognized what was happening and had a feeling there was going to be a tsunami. I told mummy."

Penny Smith, 43, said that she ran off the beach after Tilly explained what was going to happen.

"I dread to think what would have happened if we had stayed," she was quoted as telling The Sun. "Minutes later the water surged right over the beach and demolished everything in its path."

Craig Smith, general manager of the JW Marriott Hotel where Tilly's family were staying, said the 10-year-old was a heroine.

"I think it's phenomenal that Tilly's parents and the others on the beach are alive because she studied hard at school," Smith was quoted as telling The Sun.

Tilly learned about tsunamis in a lesson with geography teacher Andrew Kearney at Danes Hill School, a private school in Oxshott.

"It is an incredible coincidence that our class were learning about this type of tsunami just two weeks before Christmas," Kearney was quoted as telling the newspaper. He added that Tilly "was particularly captivated by this force of nature and its effects."