

## Tsunami survivors "lucky to be alive"

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When the tsunami struck South East Asia on Boxing Day last year, members of the channel community were in the line of the wave and have admitted they are lucky to have survived. TM Solutions' managing director, Suzanne Chappell, and her husband, operations director, David Chappell, were on a sailing holiday around the Thai Islands when the wave struck.

At 10am on Boxing Day, the couple had just dropped anchor off the Island off Phi Phi Dom. Suzanne saw the wave approaching from the horizon and commented to David about the big surf. However, David continued to watch the approaching wave and realised that something was not right.

When he understood what was happening, David screamed at Suzanne to haul up the anchor so the yacht could be manoeuvred to a better position, but the anchor jammed. The couple had to battle to save their lives. As qualified sailors, the pair were able to work deftly together to finally swing the 45 foot yacht they were on around just in time to avoid being toppled by the first wave.

Suzanne said: "Your whole life flashes in front of you in slow motion. The boat was being slapped around and we lost five metres of water from under us straight away; we could see the coral we were being dragged onto. We had to think of our own safety. The wall of water broke three quarters of a mile in front of us out to sea. We managed to get out of its way in a safe triangle of water. It was frightening."

However, others they had observed on land only seconds before the tsunami began its devastating journey were not so lucky. Suzanne described the scene prior to the panic: "At 10 o'clock in the morning, all the families were out there on this secluded beach, before it got too hot for the young children to get out in the sun. We saw babies and people on the beach before the wave, and they weren't there after, so they were all dead."

David summed up the aftershock of the event he and his wife survived: "It kind of gives you a wake up call. You think maybe the crap in my in-tray is less important, now."