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News

## Release

### **UAlbany's Center for Policy Research to Lead Study of Impacts of the Tsunami on Southern Thailand**

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ALBANY, N.Y. (March 15, 2005) -- The University at Albany's Center for Policy Research will lead an international team to study the impacts of the devastating tsunami that struck the Indian Ocean basin in December 2004. The study is funded by a \$76,819 grant from the National Science Foundation.

Led by Thomas Birkland, director of the Center for Policy Research in UAlbany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, the research team will study the impacts on physical and social infrastructure. The research team includes Richard Little, director of the University of California's Keston Institute for Infrastructure, Al Wallace, professor of decision sciences and information systems at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, and Pannapa Herabat, assistant professor of civil engineering at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand.

The researchers will collect perishable data regarding the recovery of coastal southern Thailand after the tsunami. The research will be guided by an innovative approach that assumes that the social, political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the affected areas are linked in a system. The data will be used in models that assess connections between physical and social systems, and could lead to a better understanding of how vulnerable areas can become more disaster-resistant.

The NSF review panel that recommended the proposal for approval noted that "This is an excellent team of researchers, well-known for their work in disasters." All of the researchers have 15 years or more experience in the field. Birkland and Wallace are also both members of a National Research Council committee on Disaster Research in the Social Sciences.

"We hope our research will shed light on the very important relationships between the built environment and the communities that rely on infrastructure during normal times and in disasters," said Birkland, who will travel with the team to Thailand in April, 2005.

The Center for Policy Research is the public policy research center of Rockefeller College. The Center's affiliated faculty conduct research funded by private and public organizations.

Ranked among the top-10 public affairs programs in the nation, UAlbany's Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy's core mission is to discover, communicate, and apply knowledge about politics, governance, public policy, and public management. The college directly helps public managers, policymakers, and others deal effectively with the challenges they face, making democracy stronger and governments more effective around the world. For more information about the college, visit [www.albany.edu/rockefeller/](http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/).

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