



Disaster Risk Reduction in Tourism Phuket

Role play for implementation of the APELL 10-step Procedure.

Scenario: We find ourselves in Phuket in the middle of March 2007. The tourist season is reaching its peak, hotels are fully booked and the whole tourist industry is well prepared to receive the 30,000 tourists who will be staying in the area.

Approximately 8,000 extra workers are employed at this time to handle the extra services. A majority of these workers will be absorbed in the hotel and restaurant industry. Even the hospitals and police force receive extra personnel during the tourist season.

On the 25th of March, the bureau of meteorology has observed, via weather satellite, that an unseasonal low-pressure system is building in the Indian Ocean. The storm season is normally over by this time and the low-pressure system is judged to both diminish and to take a more southerly path towards Indonesia.

This is mentioned in the local Phuket weather report on the evening of March 25th. Local government officials and heads of the tourism industry show little or no interest in the evening news and weather report.

Hotel bars and restaurants are fully booked by pleasure-seeking tourists, a hot night of partying at the disco starts with music, good food and beverages.

The planning of tomorrow's tourist excursions are made during the early evening. Diving trips to be planned to Coral Island, one of many highly praised diving locations. Furthermore, three dive boats shall travel to Karon. In addition to that, tourist boats travel to historical landmarks, the market in May Kao, etc.

The number of tourists out on excursions, and exactly where they are from day to day, can be hard to estimate. A wide range of activities are available and the number of tour operators is constantly increasing.

The Loy Kratong festival at the Phuket City has started this week and many people have gathered there. It is estimated that about 6,000 people will visit the festival. A large number of temporary restaurants have been erected in the festival area.

At the city hall, work is at high speed this night. Tomorrow at lunchtime the Minister for the Interior and the Minister for Tourism are coming to visit Phuket with their entourage. Included in the entourage is Khun Kanokporn from the DDPM.

The purpose of this visit is that an international hotel chain wants to expand and invest in Phuket. The main tourist target group is Greek and they intend to compete with India as a destination for Greek tourists especially.

This expected expansion has raised interest from the central government authorities in Thailand. The need for national investment in the form of infrastructure, power to the airport, medical care and municipal services in general is extensive.

In the city hall, local officials are fully occupied with the final planning process and have asked not to be disturbed.

By the beach, some late-night strollers think that the wind is increasing to a concerning level.

Those who happen to listen to the late night news hear that the weather will continue to get worse. Strong winds over Phang Nga are approaching.

On the morning of the 26st of March, the winds increase dramatically, a tropical storm has formed in the Indian Ocean, travelled into Indonesia and is predicted to hit Java with full force.

People in Phuket are not as concerned as the area lies outside the normal tropical storm belt.

During the afternoon however, it is clear that the weather conditions have changed radically. In the Andaman Sea, the tropical storm has been classified as a class 4 on the Saffir-Simon scale.

The weather reports are now sending extra transmissions warning that even Phuket will be hit by the storm. Strong winds rise during the night, and people in Phuket are advised to stay indoors.

On the morning of the 27th of March, catastrophe is a fact. The tropical storm has reached Phuket. The storm is still classified as a class 4 according to the Saffir-Simon scale. This means that the wind-force is between 210 - 249 km/h.