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Study to find better way to weather storm

BRITAIN'S coastal defences could be designed to better withstand powerful storms triggered by climate change, a study of wave dynamics suggests.

Improving sea walls could help limit loss of life and damage to property as coastal waters become stormier over coming years, researchers at Edinburgh University say.

The team has developed a way of predicting what happens to the millions of tonnes of water inside big waves when they collide with cliffs, sea walls and buildings.

Their findings could help engineers design coastal defences that are better able to stop sea water spilling over on to land – known as overtopping.

When a breaking wave collides with an upright structure, a powerful jet of water is thrown straight up into the air. Researchers found these huge sheets of water then split into several "fingers" before breaking apart into a spray of droplets, which can hit people and property with real force. Saltwater can also cause damage to buildings, vehicles and transport infrastructure.

Scientists joined with experts in Japan for the study.

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