



THIRD CANADIAN EDITION

NATURAL HAZARDS

Earth's Processes
as Hazards, Disasters,
and Catastrophes

KELLER | DEVECCHIO | CLAGUE

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as Hazards, Disasters,
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About the Authors

Edward A. Keller

Edward A. Keller is a professor, researcher, and writer, and, most importantly, a mentor and teacher to undergraduate and graduate students. Ed's students are currently working on earthquake hazards, how waves of sediment move through a river system following a disturbance, and on geologic controls on the habitat of endangered southern steelhead trout.

Ed was born and raised in California. He received bachelor's degrees in geology and mathematics from California State University at Fresno, and a master's degree in geology from the University of California at Davis. It was while pursuing his Ph.D. in geology from Purdue University in 1973 that Ed wrote the first edition of *Environmental Geology*, a text that became the foundation of an environmental geology curriculum in many colleges and universities. He joined the faculty of the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1976 and has been there ever since, serving multiple times as chair of both the Environmental Studies and Hydrologic Science programs. In that time he has authored more than 100 articles, including seminal works on fluvial processes and tectonic geomorphology.

Ed's academic honours include the Don J. Easterbrook Distinguished Scientist Award, Geological Society of America (2004); the Quatercentenary Fellowship from Cambridge University, England (2000); two Outstanding Alumnus Awards from Purdue University (1994, 1996); a Distinguished Alumnus Award from California State University at Fresno (1998); and the Outstanding Outreach Award from the Southern California Earthquake Center (1999).

Ed and his wife, Valery, who brings clarity to his writing, love walks on the beach at sunset and when the night herons guard moonlit sand at Arroyo Burro Beach in Santa Barbara.

Duane DeVecchio

Duane DeVecchio is currently a researcher and adjunct professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he earned his Ph.D. in geology. Since starting his graduate education, Duane has devoted a significant amount of time to becoming an effective communicator of science. He is a passionate teacher and feels strongly that students need to develop critical thinking skills, which will enable them to evaluate for themselves data presented in graphs and tables from various sources. This is particularly important today, when the Internet and cable television offer accessibility to vast amounts of information, yet the validity of this information is often questionable or misleading. Integrating data

from current and relevant research into core curriculum to illustrate the methodology and rigour of scientific investigations is essential to his teaching strategy.

Duane has a broad field-based background in the geological sciences and likes to share stories about his many months living alone in mobile trailers in the mountains and deserts so he could study rocks and landforms for his research. For his master's degree and post-master's research he conducted structural and stratigraphic analysis, as well as numerical dating of volcanic and volcanoclastic rocks in southeast Idaho and the central Mojave Desert of California, which record the Miocene depositional and extensional histories of these regions. His Ph.D. research was aimed at resolving fault slip rates and quantifying the earthquake hazard presented by several active fault-related folds growing beneath urbanized Southern California. Duane's current research interests focus on the timing and rates of change of Earth's surface due to depositional and erosional processes that result from climate change and tectonics.

When Duane is not teaching or conducting research, he enjoys whitewater rafting, rock climbing, snowboarding, and camping with his partner, Christy.

John J. Clague

John Clague is a professor of earth sciences at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby, British Columbia, and an emeritus scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada. John was employed as a research scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada for 24 years, specializing in natural hazards, climate change, and ice age geology of western Canada. In 1998, he accepted a faculty position in the Department of Earth Sciences at SFU, where he is currently based. John became a Canada Research Chair in natural hazards research in 2003 and is currently director of the Centre for Natural Hazard Research. John is the author of 300 scientific papers on subjects as diverse as earthquakes, geochemistry, and archaeology. He has written popular books on Canadian earth science issues and on earthquakes and tsunamis in the Pacific Northwest. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, former president of the Geological Association of Canada, former president of the International Union for Quaternary Research, and a recipient of numerous awards and honours.

John is a strong proponent of the philosophy captured so eloquently by Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that has."

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Brief Contents

- 1** Introduction to Natural Hazards 2
- 2** Internal Structure of Earth and Plate Tectonics 24
- 3** Earthquakes 46
- 4** Tsunamis 90
- 5** Volcanoes and Volcanic Eruptions 114
- 6** Landslides 156
- 7** Snow Avalanches 186
- 8** Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction 208
- 9** River Flooding 234
- 10** Atmosphere and Severe Weather 272
- 11** Hurricanes and Extratropical Cyclones 306
- 12** Waves, Currents, and Coastlines 334
- 13** Wildfires 364
- 14** Climate Change 390
- 15** Impacts and Extinctions 422

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Contents

Preface xxi

1 Introduction to Natural Hazards 2

Case History: Earthquake in Haiti, 2010: Lessons Learned 2

- 1.1 Why Studying Natural Hazards Is Important 5
 - Hazardous Natural Processes and Energy Sources 6
 - Hazard, Risk, Disaster, and Catastrophe 7
 - Death and Damage Caused by Natural Hazards 8
- 1.2 Magnitude and Frequency of Hazardous Events 9
- 1.3 Role of History in Understanding Hazards 10
- 1.4 Geologic Cycle 11
 - The Tectonic Cycle 11
 - The Rock Cycle 11
 - The Hydrologic Cycle 12
 - Biogeochemical Cycles 12
- 1.5 Fundamental Concepts for Understanding Natural Processes as Hazards 13
 - Concept 1:** Hazards can be understood through scientific investigation and analysis. 13
 - Science and Natural Hazards 13
 - Hazardous Processes Are Natural 13
 - Prediction, Forecast, and Warning 14
 - Concept 2:** An understanding of hazardous processes is vital to evaluating risk. 15
 - Concept 3:** Hazards are commonly linked to each other and to the environment in which they occur. 16
 - Concept 4:** Population growth and socio-economic changes increase the risk from natural hazards. 16
 - Concept 5:** Damage and loss of life from natural disasters can be reduced. 17
 - Reactive Response: Recovery from Disasters 17
 - Proactive Response: Avoiding and Adjusting to Hazards 20
- 1.6 Many Hazards Provide a Natural Service Function 21
- 1.7 Climate Change and Natural Hazards 21
 - Summary 22
 - Key Terms 23
 - Did You Learn? 23
 - Critical Thinking Questions 23
 - MasteringGeology 23





2 Internal Structure of Earth and Plate Tectonics 24

Case History: Two Cities in Harm's Way 24

- 2.1 Internal Structure of Earth 26
 - Earth Is Layered and Dynamic 26
 - Continents and Ocean Basins Have Different Properties and History 28
- 2.2 How We Know about Earth's Internal Structure 28
- 2.3 Plate Tectonics 28
 - Movement of Lithospheric Plates 28
 - Types of Plate Boundaries 31
 - Rates of Plate Motion 37
 - Hot Spots 37
 - A Closer Look 2.1** Paleomagnetism and Seafloor Spreading 38
 - A Famous Canadian's Contribution to the Plate Tectonic Theory 40
- 2.4 Mechanisms That Move Plates 42
- 2.5 Plate Tectonics and Hazards 43
 - Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts** Internal Structure of Earth and Plate Tectonics 43
- Summary 44
- Key Terms 44
- Did You Learn? 44
- Critical Thinking Questions 45
- MasteringGeology 45



3 Earthquakes 46

Case History: The Toll of Earthquakes 46

- 3.1 Introduction to Earthquakes 49
 - Earthquake Magnitude 49
 - Earthquake Intensity 50
- 3.2 Earthquake Processes 54
 - Process of Faulting 54
 - Fault Types 54
 - Fault Activity 55
 - Tectonic Creep and Slow Earthquakes 55
 - Seismic Waves 55
- 3.3 Earthquake Shaking 57
 - Distance to the Epicentre and Focal Depth 57
 - Direction of Rupture 60
 - Local Soil and Rock Conditions 62

3.4	The Earthquake Cycle	63
3.5	Geographic Regions at Risk from Earthquakes	65
	Plate-Boundary Earthquakes	65
	Intraplate Earthquakes	66
3.6	Effects of Earthquakes and Linkages with Other Natural Hazards	68
	Shaking and Ground Rupture	68
	Liquefaction	68
	Survivor Story Shaky Honeymoon	69
	Land-Level Changes	70
	Landslides	71
	Fires	72
	Disease	72
3.7	Natural Service Functions of Earthquakes	72
	Groundwater and Energy Resources	72
	Mineral Resources	72
	Landform Development	72
3.8	Human Interaction with Earthquakes	73
	Reservoirs	73
	Deep Waste Disposal	73
	Pumping of Oil or Gas	73
	Hydraulic Fracturing	73
	Nuclear Explosions	75
3.9	Minimizing the Earthquake Hazard	75
	Earthquake Hazard Reduction Programs	75
	Estimation of Seismic Risk	75
	Case Study 3.1 The Denali Earthquake: Estimating Potential Ground Rupture Pays Off	76
	Forecasts and Prediction	77
	Status of Earthquake Prediction and Forecasting	79
	Case Study 3.2 The 2009 L'Aquila Earthquake	80
	Professional Profile Gail Atkinson, Seismologist	82
	Earthquake Warning Systems	83
3.10	Perception of and Adjustment to the Earthquake Hazard	83
	Perception of the Earthquake Hazard	83
	Community Adjustments to the Earthquake Hazard	83
	Personal Adjustments Before, During, and After an Earthquake	84
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Earthquakes	86
	Summary	87
	Key Terms	88
	Did You Learn?	88
	Critical Thinking Questions	88
	MasteringGeology	89



4 Tsunamis 90

Case History: Giant Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan 90

- 4.1 Introduction to Tsunamis 94
 - Earthquake-Triggered Tsunamis 94
 - Case Study 4.1** Catastrophe in the Indian Ocean 96
 - Survivor Story** Swept Away by a Tsunami 99
 - A Closer Look 4.1** Geologic Evidence for Tsunamis 100
 - Landslide-Triggered Tsunamis 100
 - Volcanic-Triggered Tsunamis 103
- 4.2 Regions at Risk 103
- 4.3 Effects of Tsunamis and Links with Other Natural Hazards 104
- 4.4 Minimizing the Tsunami Hazard 105
 - Detection and Warning 105
 - Structural Control 106
 - Tsunami Inundation Maps 107
 - Land Use 107
 - Probability Analysis 107
 - Education 108
 - Professional Profile** Jose Borrero, Tsunami Scientist 110
 - Tsunami Readiness 111
- 4.5 Perception and Personal Adjustment to Tsunami Hazard 111
 - Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts** Tsunamis 111
 - Summary 112
 - Key Terms 112
 - Did You Learn? 113
 - Critical Thinking Questions 113
 - MasteringGeology 113



5 Volcanoes and Volcanic Eruptions 114

Case History: Mount Unzen, 1991 114

- 5.1 Introduction to Volcanoes 114
 - How Magma Forms 114
 - Magma Properties 118
 - Volcano Types 120
 - Volcanic Features 124
 - Case Study 5.1** Planning for a Disaster in Naples 125
 - Volcanoes and Plate Tectonics 129
- 5.2 Geographic Regions with Active Volcanoes 131

5.3	Volcanic Hazards	133
	Lava Flows	133
	Pyroclastic Flows and Surges	135
	Lateral Blasts	135
	Ash Falls	135
	Case Study 5.2 Icelandic Eruption Paralyzes Air Travel in Europe	137
	Poisonous Gases	137
	Edifice or Sector Collapse	139
	Debris Flows and Other Mass Movements	139
	A Closer Look 5.1 Mount St. Helens 1980–2008: From Lateral Blasts to Lava Flows	141
5.4	Links between Volcanoes and Other Natural Hazards	144
	Professional Profile Catherine Hickson, Volcano Scientist	145
5.5	Natural Service Functions of Volcanoes	146
	Volcanic Soils	146
	Geothermal Power	146
	Recreation	146
	Creation of New Land	146
5.6	Minimizing the Volcanic Hazard	147
	Forecasting	147
	Volcanic Alert or Warning	150
5.7	Perception of and Adjustment to the Volcanic Hazard	150
	Perception of Volcanic Risk	150
	Survivor Story A Close Call with Mount St. Helens	151
	Adjustments to Volcanic Hazards	151
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Volcanoes and Volcanic Eruptions	153
	Summary	153
	Key Terms	154
	Did You Learn?	154
	Critical Thinking Questions	154
	MasteringGeology	155

6 Landslides 156

Case History: The Frank Slide 156

6.1	Introduction to Landslides	159
	Types of Landslides	159
	Forces on Slopes	163
	A Closer Look 6.1 Estimating the Velocity of Landslides from Their Run-Up and Superelevation	164
6.2	Geographic Regions at Risk from Landslides	170
6.3	Effects of Landslides and Links with Other Natural Hazards	171



	Effects of Landslides	171
	Links between Landslides and Other Natural Hazards	171
	Survivor Story Landslide	172
	Case Study 6.1 Mount Meager Landslides and Consequent Flooding	173
6.4	Natural Service Functions of Landslides	175
6.5	Human Interaction with Landslides	175
	Timber Harvesting	175
	Urbanization	175
6.6	Minimizing Landslide Hazard and Risk	177
	Identification of Potential Landslides	177
	Professional Profile Matthias Jakob, Engineering Geologist	178
	Prevention of Landslides	179
	Landslide Warning Systems	182
6.7	Perception of and Adjustment to Landslide Hazards	182
	Perception of Landslide Hazards	182
	Adjustments to the Landslide Hazard	182
	Personal Adjustments: What You Can Do to Minimize Your Landslide Risk	182
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Landslides	183
	Summary	184
	Key Terms	184
	Did You Learn?	184
	Critical Thinking Questions	185
	MasteringGeology	185



7 Snow Avalanches 186

	Case History: The Chilkoot Disaster	186
7.1	Introduction to Snow Avalanches	188
	Snow Climatology	189
	Avalanche Initiation	189
	Weak Layers	190
	Avalanche Motion	191
	Avalanche Triggering	191
	Terrain Factors	191
7.2	Geographic Regions at Risk of Avalanches	193
7.3	Impacts of Avalanches and Links with Other Natural Hazards	194
	Impacts of Avalanches	194
	Links between Avalanches and Other Natural Hazards	194
7.4	Natural Service Functions of Avalanches	195
7.5	Human Interaction with Avalanches	195

7.6	Minimizing Avalanche Risk	195
	Location of Infrastructure	195
	Structures in the Start Zone	196
	Structures in the Track and Run-Out Zone	196
	Control through the Use of Explosives	196
	Case Study 7.1 Deadly Avalanche in Glacier National Park	197
	Forecasting	198
	Modelling	200
7.7	Avalanche Safety	201
	Good Habits Minimize Risk	201
	Professional Profile Grant Statham, Parks Canada	203
7.8	Avalanche Rescue and Survival	203
	Avalanche Cords	204
	Avalanche Transceivers	204
	Probes	204
	Shovels	204
	Avalanche Dogs	204
	Avalanche Survival	204
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Snow Avalanches	205
	Summary	205
	Key Terms	206
	Did You Learn?	206
	Critical Thinking Questions	206
	MasteringGeology	207

8 Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction 208

Case History: Venice Is Sinking 208

8.1	Introduction to Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction	210
	Karst	210
	Survivor Story Sinkhole Drains Lake	213
	Permafrost	213
	Piping	215
	Sediment Compaction	215
	Expansive Soils	216
	Earthquakes	216
	Deflation of Magma Chambers	216
8.2	Regions at Risk from Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction	218
8.3	Effects of Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction	219
	Sinkhole Formation	219



Groundwater Use and Contamination 219
 Permafrost Thaw 219
 Coastal Flooding and Loss of Wetlands 220
 Soil Volume Changes 220
Case Study 8.1 Permafrost Thaw in Canada’s North 221

8.4 Links between Subsidence, Soil Volume Changes, and Other Natural Hazards 222
Case Study 8.2 Loss of Wetlands on the Mississippi Delta 223

8.5 Natural Service Functions of Subsidence 225
 Water Supply 225
 Aesthetic and Scientific Resources 225
 Unique Ecosystems 226

8.6 Human Interaction with Subsidence 226
 Withdrawal of Fluids 226
 Underground Mining 228
 Permafrost Thaw 228
 Restricting Deltaic Sedimentation 229
 Draining Wetlands 229
 Landscaping on Expansive Soils 229

8.7 Minimizing Subsidence Hazards 229
 Restricting Fluid Withdrawal 229
 Regulating Mining 229
 Preventing Damage from Thawing Permafrost 229
 Reducing Damage from Deltaic Subsidence 230
 Stopping the Draining of Wetlands 230
 Preventing Damage from Expansive Soils 230

8.8 Perception of and Adjustments to Subsidence and Soil Hazards 230
 Perception of Subsidence and Soil Hazards 230
 Adjustments to Subsidence and Soil Hazards 230
Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Subsidence and Soil Expansion and Contraction 231

Summary 232
 Key Terms 232
 Did You Learn? 232
 Critical Thinking Questions 233
 MasteringGeology 233



9 River Flooding 234

Case History: The Alberta Floods of 2013 234

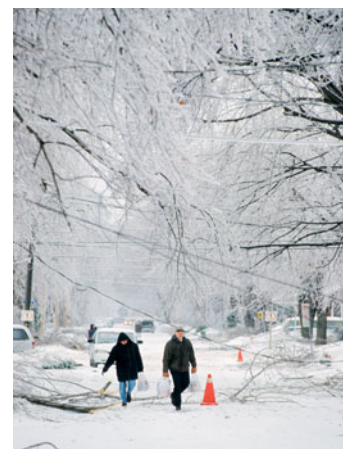
9.1 Introduction to Rivers 237
 Earth Material Transported by Rivers 238
 River Velocity, Discharge, Erosion, and Sediment Deposition 238

	Channel Patterns and Floodplain Formation	238
9.2	Flooding	241
	Case Study 9.1 Mississippi River Floods of 1973 and 1993	242
	Flash Floods and Downstream Floods	246
	Survivor Story Flooding from Hurricane Hazel	247
	Case Study 9.2 The Saguenay Flood	250
	Outburst Floods	250
	A Closer Look 9.1 Magnitude and Frequency of Floods	251
9.3	Geographic Regions at Risk for Flooding	253
9.4	Effects of Flooding and Links between Floods and Other Hazards	255
9.5	Natural Service Functions	256
	Fertile Land	256
	Aquatic Ecosystems	256
	Sediment Supply	256
9.6	Human Interaction with Flooding	256
	Land-Use Changes	256
	Dam Construction	257
	Urbanization and Flooding	258
9.7	Minimizing the Flood Hazard	260
	The Structural Approach	260
	Channel Restoration: An Alternative to Channelization	263
	Flood Forecasts and Advisories	264
9.8	Perception of and Adjustment to Flood Hazards	264
	Perception of Flood Hazards	264
	Adjustments to the Flood Hazard	265
	Professional Profile Eve Grunfest, Geographer	266
	Relocating People from Floodplains	268
	Personal Adjustments: What to Do and What Not to Do	269
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts River Flooding	269
	Summary	270
	Key Terms	270
	Did You Learn?	270
	Critical Thinking Questions	271
	MasteringGeology	271

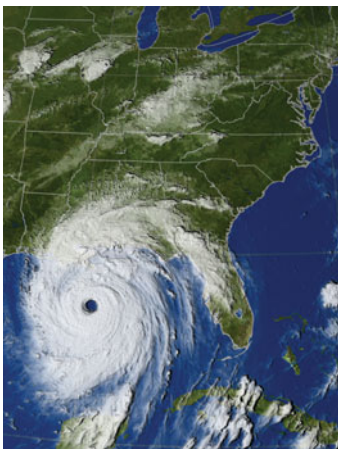
10 Atmosphere and Severe Weather 272

Case History: The 1998 Ice Storm 272

10.1	Energy	274
	Types of Energy	276
	Heat Transfer	276



10.2	Energy at Earth's Surface	276
	Electromagnetic Energy	277
	Energy Behaviour	277
10.3	The Atmosphere	278
	Composition of the Atmosphere	278
	Structure of the Atmosphere	279
10.4	Weather Processes	280
	Atmospheric Pressure	280
	Vertical Stability of the Atmosphere	282
	Fronts	282
10.5	Hazardous Weather	282
	Thunderstorms	282
	A Closer Look 10.1 Coriolis Effect	284
	Case Study 10.1 Lightning	287
	Tornadoes	289
	Survivor Story Struck by Lightning	290
	Case Study 10.2 The Edmonton Tornado	293
	Blizzards, Extreme Cold, and Ice Storms	294
	Fog	297
	Drought	297
	Dust and Sand Storms	299
	Heat Waves	299
10.6	Human Interaction with Weather	301
10.7	Links with Other Hazards	301
10.8	Natural Service Functions of Severe Weather	302
10.9	Minimizing Severe Weather Hazards	302
	Forecasting and Predicting Weather Hazards	302
	Adjustment to Severe Weather Hazards	303
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Atmosphere and Severe Weather	303
	Summary	304
	Key Terms	305
	Did You Learn?	305
	Critical Thinking Questions	305
	MasteringGeology	305



11 Hurricanes and Extratropical Cyclones 306

Case History: Hurricane Katrina 306

Survivor Story Hurricane Katrina 310

11.1	Introduction to Cyclones	311
-------------	--------------------------	-----

Classification	311
Naming	311
11.2 Cyclone Development	312
Tropical Cyclones	312
Extratropical Cyclones	315
11.3 Geographic Regions at Risk for Cyclones	318
Case Study 11.1 Hurricane Juan	320
11.4 Effects of Cyclones	322
Storm Surge	322
High Winds	323
Case Study 11.2 Hurricane Sandy	324
Heavy Rains	326
11.5 Links between Cyclones and Other Natural Hazards	326
11.6 Natural Service Functions of Severe Weather	327
11.7 Human Interaction with Weather	327
11.8 Minimizing the Effects of Cyclones	328
Forecasts and Warnings	328
11.9 Perception of and Adjustment to Cyclones	331
Perception of Cyclones	331
Adjustments to Cyclones	331
Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Hurricanes and Extratropical Cyclones	331
Summary	332
Key Terms	333
Did You Learn?	333
Critical Thinking Questions	333
MasteringGeology	333

12 Waves, Currents, and Coastlines 334

Case History: Harris Meisner's Farm by the Sea 334

12.1 Introduction to Coastal Hazards	337
12.2 Coastal Processes	337
Waves	337
Case Study 12.1 Rogue Waves	338
Beach Form and Processes	342
12.3 Sea-Level Change	343
Eustatic Sea-Level Change	344
Isostatic Sea-Level Change	344
Tectonic and Other Effects	344



12.4	Coastal Hazards	344
	Rip Currents	344
	Coastal Erosion	345
	Professional Profile Phil Hill, Coastal Geologist	345
	A Closer Look 12.1 Beach Budget	347
	Sea-Level Rise	349
12.5	Links between Coastal Processes and Other Natural Hazards	350
12.6	Natural Service Functions of Coastal Processes	352
12.7	Human Interaction with Coastal Processes	352
12.8	Minimizing Damage from Coastal Hazards	356
	Hard Stabilization	356
	A Closer Look 12.2 E-Lines and E-Zones	357
	Soft Solutions	358
12.9	Perception of Coastal Hazards	359
12.10	Future Coastal Zone Management	361
	Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Coastal Hazards	361
	Summary	362
	Key Terms	363
	Did You Learn?	363
	Critical Thinking Questions	363
	MasteringGeology	363



13 Wildfires 364

Case History: Wildfires in British Columbia in 2003 364

13.1	Introduction to Wildfire	366
13.2	Wildfire as a Process	367
	Fire Environment	368
13.3	Geographic Regions at Risk from Wildfires	371
	Case Study 13.1 Wildfires in Canada	372
	Case Study 13.2 The 2011 Slave Lake Wildfire	374
13.4	Effects of Wildfires and Links with Climate	376
	Effects on the Geological Environment	376
	Effects on the Atmosphere	376
	Links with Climate	376
	Professional Profile Bob Krans	377
13.5	Impacts of Wildfires on Plants and Animals	379
13.6	Natural Service Functions of Wildfires	379
	Case Study 13.3 Yellowstone Fires of 1988	380

- 13.7** Fire Management 381
 - Scientific Research 381
 - Data Collection 381
 - Fire Suppression 381
- 13.8** Perception of and Adjustment to the Wildfire Hazard 383
 - Perception of Wildfire Hazard 383
 - Reducing Wildfire Risk 384
 - Survivor Story** The Cedar Fire 386
 - Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts** Wildfires 387
- Summary 388
- Key Terms 388
- Did You Learn? 388
- Critical Thinking Questions 388
- MasteringGeology 389

14 Climate Change 390

Case History: Arctic Threatened by Climate Change 390

- 14.1** Global Change and Earth System Science: An Overview 394
- 14.2** Climate and Weather 394
- 14.3** The Atmosphere 394
 - Composition of the Atmosphere 394
 - Structure of the Atmosphere 397
 - Atmospheric Circulation 397
 - The Greenhouse Effect 398
- 14.4** How We Study Climate Change and Make Predictions of Future Climate 399
 - Tree Rings 399
 - Sediments 399
 - Ice Cores 400
 - Pollen 400
 - Global Climate Models 400
- 14.5** Climate Change on Long Timescales 402
 - Pleistocene Glaciation 402
- 14.6** Climate Change on Short Timescales 404
 - Evidence for Climate Change on Short Timescales 404
 - Causes of Climate Change on Short Timescales 406
- 14.7** Effects of Climate Change 409
 - Glacier Ice and Sea-Level Rise 410
 - Glacier Hazards 411
 - Thawing of Permafrost 411
 - Changes in Climate Patterns 411
 - Changes in the Biosphere 412



Desertification and Drought 414
Case Study 14.1 Palliser Triangle 414
 Wildfires 415

14.8 Minimizing the Effects of Global Warming 415
 International Agreements 416
 Carbon Sequestration 417
 Fossil Fuels and Future Climate Change 417
A Closer Look 14.1 Abrupt Climate Change 418

14.9 Adaptation 418
Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Climate Change 419

Summary 420
 Key Terms 420
 Did You Learn? 421
 Critical Thinking Questions 421
 MasteringGeology 421



15 Impacts and Extinctions 422

Case History: The Tunguska Event 422

15.1 Earth's Place in Space 424
 Asteroids, Meteoroids, and Comets 425

15.2 Airbursts and Impacts 425
 Impact Craters 429
Survivor Story Meteorites in Illinois 430
Case Study 15.1 The Sudbury Impact Event 434
Case Study 15.2 Uniformitarianism, Gradualism, and Catastrophes 436

15.3 Mass Extinctions 437
 K-T Boundary Mass Extinction 438

15.4 Links with Other Natural Hazards 440

15.5 Impact Hazards and Risk 440
 Risk Related to Impacts 440
 Managing the Impact Hazard 443
Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts Impacts and Extinctions 445

Summary 446
 Key Terms 446
 Did You Learn? 446
 Critical Thinking Questions 446
 MasteringGeology 447
 Glossary 448
 References 461
 Index 478

Preface

Natural Hazards: Earth's Processes as Hazards, Disasters, and Catastrophes, Third Canadian Edition is an introductory university-level, non-technical survey of natural processes that have direct, often sudden, and violent impacts on humanity. The book integrates principles of geology, geography, hydrology, meteorology, climatology, oceanography, soil science, ecology, and solar system astronomy. It has been designed for a course for non-science majors and will help instructors guide students who may have little background in science through the geologic underpinnings and societal repercussions of hazardous Earth processes. It is also suitable for topical introductory courses in physical geology, physical geography, and Earth science.

In preparing the third edition of this book, we took advantage of the growing amount of information about natural hazards, disasters, and catastrophes. Since the second edition was published, many natural disasters and catastrophes have occurred. In 2010, drought, heat wave, and air pollution from wildfires killed several thousand people in Moscow; in 2011, great earthquakes and tsunamis struck Chile and Japan; and in 2012, a superstorm caused over \$65 billion damage on the Atlantic coast of the United States. In 2013, destructive floods happened in southwest Alberta and Colorado, and wildfires destroyed more than 200 homes in New South Wales, Australia. These events are the result of enormous forces that are at work both inside and on the surface of our planet.

Climate change is causing glaciers to melt, permafrost to thaw, the atmosphere and oceans to warm, and sea level to rise more rapidly than had originally been forecast. These changes are caused in part by human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels, which releases vast amounts of carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere. The interaction between humans and Earth processes has never been clearer, and the need for understanding these processes as hazards for our economy and society has never been greater.

This edition of *Natural Hazards* seeks to explain destructive Earth processes in an understandable way, illustrate how they affect us, and discuss how we can better prepare for, and adjust to, inevitable natural disasters.

An important point, central to both the text and course, is that Earth processes are not, in and of themselves “hazards,” even though we describe them as such. Earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires are natural processes and have occurred for hundreds of millions of years. They are hazards only when they impact people. Ironically, human behaviour can turn hazardous events into disasters or, worse, catastrophes. The text strives to present these phenomena as natural geologic processes that have human impacts.

A course in natural hazards offers many benefits besides satisfying students’ natural curiosity about such events. An informed citizenry is our best guarantee of a prosperous future.

Armed with insights into the complex relations between people and the geologic environment, we will ask better questions and make better choices. On a local level, we will be better prepared to make decisions about where we live and how best to invest our time and resources. On national and global levels, we will be better able to advise our leaders on important issues related to natural hazards that impact our lives.

Distinguishing Features of the Third Edition

With these objectives in mind, we have incorporated into this edition of *Natural Hazards* a number of features designed to support the student and instructor.

A Balanced Approach

Many readers will naturally focus on natural hazards that threaten their community, province, or country, but globalization of our economy, near-universal information access, and the effects of humans on our planet require a broader, more balanced approach to the study of natural hazards and risk. A major earthquake in Tokyo or San Francisco would affect trade in the ports of Vancouver and Seattle, the economy of Silicon Valley in California, and the price of computers in Toronto and Halifax. The authors have tried to provide balanced coverage of natural hazards, with examples from Canada, the United States, and other countries. Topics covered in this edition include earthquakes and tsunamis on the British Columbia coast; the 1929 Grand Banks earthquake and tsunami; disastrous historic floods on the Fraser and Red rivers; a discussion of how Canada deals with floods; large landslides at Frank, Alberta, in 1903, near Hope, British Columbia, in 1965, and north of Pemberton, British Columbia, in 2010; the disastrous ice storm in Ontario and Quebec in 1998; the 1983 Edmonton tornado; Hurricanes Katrina, Hazel, and Juan; Superstorm Sandy in 2012; destructive wildfires in Kelowna, British Columbia, in 2003 and Slave Lake, Alberta, in 2011; recent killer earthquakes in southwest China, Haiti, New Zealand, and Japan; and an expanded treatment of climate change and its impacts in Canada. This edition also includes a new chapter on plate tectonics.

This book treats each topic as both a natural phenomenon and a human hazard. For example, the discussion of tsunamis includes a description not only of their characteristics, causes, global distribution, frequency, and effects, but also of engineering and nonstructural approaches that can be taken to reduce tsunami risk.

Five Fundamental Concepts

Five key concepts provide a conceptual framework of understanding that guide the reader:

1. Hazards can be understood through scientific investigation and analysis.

Most hazardous events and processes can be monitored and mapped and their future occurrence and magnitude forecast based on the frequency of past events, patterns in their occurrence, and types of precursor events.

2. An understanding of hazardous processes is vital to evaluating risk.

Hazardous processes are amenable to risk analysis because the probability and consequences of an event can be determined or estimated.

3. Hazards are commonly linked to each other and to the environment in which they occur.

Hazardous processes are linked in many ways. For example, earthquakes can produce landslides and giant sea waves called tsunamis, and hurricanes cause flooding and coastal erosion.

4. Population growth and socio-economic changes increase risk from natural hazards.

As a result of increasing human population, larger concentrations of economic wealth, and poor land-use practices, events that previously caused disasters are now causing catastrophes.

5. Damage and loss of life from natural disasters can be reduced.

Minimizing the potential adverse effects of hazardous processes requires an integrated approach that includes scientific understanding, land-use planning and regulation, engineering, education, and proactive disaster preparedness.

These five concepts are introduced in Chapter 1 and revisited throughout the text. They provide a framework for understanding that can extend beyond the course into everyday life.

Survivor Stories and Professional Profiles

Many chapters contain the personal story of someone who has had a brush with disaster, as well as a profile of a scientist or other professional who has worked with a particular hazard. Although most of us will never experience a volcanic eruption, tsunami, or major hurricane, we are naturally curious about what we would see, hear, and feel if we did. For example, a scientific description of a volcanic eruption does not convey the amazement and terror that Canadian volcanologist Catherine Hickson experienced on the morning of May 18, 1980, when Mount St. Helens exploded (see her professional profile on page 145). Likewise, the story of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2003 does not give us the real sense of what Christine Lang felt when she was caught up in

and nearly killed in the tsunami (see Survivor Story in Chapter 4). To fully understand and appreciate natural hazards, we need both scientific knowledge and human experience. As you read the survivor stories, ask yourself what you would do in a similar situation. This knowledge could save your life someday, as it did for Tilly Smith and her family on the beach in Phuket, Thailand, in December 2003 (see Chapter 4).

People study and work with natural hazards for many reasons—curiosity, monetary reward, excitement, or the desire to help others prepare for events that might threaten their lives and property. As you read each professional profile, think about the person’s motivation, the type of work he or she does, and how that work contributes to increasing human knowledge or reducing risk. For example, Grant Statham, who works for Parks Canada, has studied snow avalanches in western Canada for nearly three decades (see his professional profile in Chapter 7). For him, this study is both a vocation and an avocation. He has had a lifelong interest in avalanches and is striving to reduce avalanche injuries and deaths by promoting scientific study, educational programs, and heightened awareness of the hazard. Most of the survivor stories and professional profiles are based on interviews conducted exclusively for *Natural Hazards*.

Major New Material in the Third Edition

The third edition benefited greatly from feedback from instructors who used the previous edition, and many of the changes reflect their thoughtful reviews. New material for the third edition includes the following:

- NEW! A chapter on plate tectonics that reflects its overarching importance in Earth science.
- NEW! Revisiting the Fundamental Concepts, which reminds students of the unifying theme of the five fundamental concepts introduced in the first chapter. This feature identifies how the five fundamental concepts relate to each hazard.
- NEW! “A Closer Look” uses real-life events and data to enhance understanding and comprehension not only of the hazard, but also its mitigation.
- NEW! “Did You Learn” questions at the end of each chapter allow students to track their comprehension of the learning goals stated at the beginning of the chapter.
- Coverage of the most recent disasters on Earth, such as recent earthquakes in Haiti, Italy, New Zealand, Chile, Italy, and Japan; the Icelandic volcanic eruptions in 2010; wildfires in Alberta in 2011; the superstorm on the Atlantic coast of the United States in 2012; the flooding in Alberta in 2013; and more.
- Revised design throughout the book includes changes to the chapter openers, which feature new photos and content.
- Updated art with new figures, illustrations, and photos throughout the book. Each image has been reviewed for accuracy, relevance, and its educational impact.

Features of the Text

This text is sensitive to the study needs of students. Each chapter is clearly structured to help students understand the material and effectively review the major concepts. Each chapter is organized with the following study aids:

- Learning Objectives on the first page of each chapter clearly state what students should have achieved after completing their study of the topic.
- Selected features, including Case Studies, Closer Look boxes, Survivor Stories, and Professional Profiles, are added where appropriate to help students understand natural hazards through real-world examples.
- A discussion of the five fundamental concepts as they apply to the specific hazard at hand is followed by a summary. The summaries reinforce the major points of each chapter and help students focus on important concepts.
- References are included with each chapter to provide additional sources of information and give credit to the scholars who did the research reported in the chapter.
- Key terms are highlighted in **bold** where they are first introduced in detail in the text. These terms are listed at the end of each chapter. Other important technical terms that may be new to students are indicated in *italics*. All **key terms** and *useful terms* are defined in a glossary at the end of the book.
- Review questions at the end of each chapter will help students focus on the important subject matter.
- Critical thinking questions at the end of each chapter have been designed to stimulate students to think about important issues and to apply the information to both their lives and society.
- Appendices, which are included in the online resources, provide additional information useful for understanding some of the more applied aspects of geology that relate to natural hazards. This information may be helpful in supplementing laboratory and field exercises.

The Teaching and Learning Package

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MasteringGeology delivers engaging, dynamic learning opportunities that focus on course objectives and is responsive to each student's progress. It helps students absorb course material and understand difficult concepts.

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outcomes. Instructors can add their own learning outcomes, to track student performance.

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- Mathematics Review, Chemistry Review, Geography Review, and Test Bank questions.
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See www.masteringgeology.com.

Hazard City: Assignments in Applied Geology is now part of MasteringGeology. In Hazard City, students will assume the role of a practising geologist and be assigned a variety of tasks: gathering and analyzing real data, evaluating risk, and making assessments and recommendations. Topics include:

Ground Water Contamination: Students use field and laboratory data to prepare a contour map of the water table, determine the direction of ground water flow, and map a contaminated area.

Volcanic Hazard Assessment: Students research volcanic hazards, collect field information, and use decision making to determine the potential impact of a volcanic eruption on different parts of Hazard City.

Landslide Hazard Assessment: Students research the factors that determine the landslide hazard at five construction sites and make recommendations for development.

Earthquake Damage Assessment: Students research the effects of earthquakes on buildings, explore Hazard City, and determine the number of people needing emergency housing given an earthquake of specific intensity.

Flood Insurance Rate Maps: Students estimate flood insurance premiums using a flood insurance rate map, insurance tables, and site characteristics.

Snowpack Monitoring: Students use climatic data to estimate variables that are key to flood control and water supply management.

Coal Property Evaluation: Students estimate what the potential value of a mineral property is by learning about mining and property evaluation and applying that knowledge in a resource calculation.

Landfill Siting: Students use maps and geological data to determine if any of five proposed sites meet the requirements of the State Administrative Code for landfill siting.

Shoreline Property Assessment: Students visit four related waterfront building sites—some developed and some not—and analyze the risk each faces due to shoreline erosion processes.

Tsunamis/Storm Surges: Students research the causes and effects of tsunamis and storm surges and then prepare a risk assessment report for a small oceanside village near Hazard City.

Map Reading: In order to identify the source of water contamination in a local stream, students learn how to read topographic maps and use their knowledge to plan their field work.

For the Instructor

Instruction Resource Centre

Everything you need, where you want it. Pearson Canada has assembled a first-rate package for *Natural Hazards*. The following instructor supplements are available for download from a password-protected section of Pearson Canada's online catalogue (www.pearsoncanada.ca/highered). Navigate to your book's catalogue page to view a list of available supplements. See your local sales representative for details and access.

- **Instructor's Manual.** The Instructor's Manual provides chapter outlines and objectives, classroom discussion topics, and answers to the end-of-chapter questions in the text.
- **Test Generator.** The TestGen provides more than 500 questions in multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, and essay formats. It also tests recall, understanding, and application of the main data and concepts presented in the text.
- **PowerPoint® Presentation.** PowerPoint presentations are provided for each chapter and include all the figures and many photos from the text.
- **The Prentice Hall Geoscience Animation Library (ISBN 978-0-321-71684-2).** The Prentice Hall Geoscience Animation Library arose from a survey of instructors. We asked them to identify the concepts most difficult to teach using traditional, static resources. Then we animated them. Created through a unique collaboration of five of Prentice Hall's leading geoscience authors, the animations represent a significant advance in lecture presentation. Each animation is mapped to the corresponding chapter in *Natural Hazards* and is available on the Instructor's Resource site. They are provided as Flash files and, for convenience, are pre-loaded into PowerPoint slides.
- **CourseSmart for Instructors.** CourseSmart goes beyond traditional expectations—providing instant, online access to the textbooks and course materials you need at a lower cost for students. And even as students save money, you can save time and hassle with a digital eTextbook that allows you to search for the most relevant content at the moment you need it. Whether it's evaluating textbooks or creating lecture notes to help students with difficult concepts, CourseSmart can

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- **Pearson Custom Library.** For enrollments of at least 25 students, you can create your own textbook by choosing the chapters that best suit your own course needs. To begin building your custom text, visit www.pearsoncustomlibrary.com. You may also work with a dedicated Pearson Custom editor to create your ideal text—publishing your own original content or mixing and matching Pearson content. Contact your local Pearson representative to get started.
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 Duane E. DeVecchio
Santa Barbara, California
 John J. Clague
Burnaby, British Columbia



Monster on the Prairie (Saskatchewan)

Winner of Canadian Geographic's Whatever the Weather Photo Contest

Photographer Craig Hilts is a stock broker and storm chaser who gives talks to local schools on storm safety and preparedness. To see more of Craig's work visit: <http://www.prairiefirephoto.com/>

CHAPTER 1

► **CATASTROPHE IN HAITI** A building in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, destroyed by the devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010. Buildings such as this were not constructed to withstand the ground shaking from a strong earthquake. (Getty Images, Design Pics /Rey old Mainse)

Introduction to Natural Hazards

Learning Objectives

Natural processes, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, floods, and hurricanes, threaten human life and property throughout the world. As the world's population continues to grow, disasters and catastrophes will become more common. An understanding of natural processes as hazards requires some basic knowledge of earth science. Your goals in reading this chapter should be to

- Recognize that natural disasters and catastrophes are high-energy events caused by natural Earth processes
- Understand that natural hazards have social, economic, and political dimensions that are just as important as the hazards themselves
- Understand the differences among hazard, risk, acceptable risk, disaster, and catastrophe
- Understand the concept that the magnitude of a hazardous event is inversely related to its frequency
- Recognize that many natural hazards are linked to one another
- Recognize that population growth, concentration of infrastructure and wealth in hazardous areas, and land-use decisions are increasing our vulnerability to natural disasters
- Understand that hazardous natural processes can also provide benefits

Earthquake in Haiti, 2010: Lessons Learned

One of the fundamental realities in the study of natural hazards is that people and governments are poorly prepared for rare natural disasters; they commonly behave as if a disaster will never happen. This unfortunate reality is well illustrated by five recent catastrophes: the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, Hurricane Katrina on the U.S. Gulf Coast in August 2004, the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, the Tohoku (Japan) earthquake and tsunami in April 2011, and superstorm Sandy in October 2012. Each of these events provides hard lessons that can help us reduce the toll of future disasters. Here, we illustrate these lessons using the Haiti earthquake as an example.

The massive earthquake struck southern Haiti without warning in the late afternoon (local time) of January 12, 2010. The *epicentre* was near the town of Léogâne, about 25 km west of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital. After several tens of seconds of strong shaking, close to 240 000 people had lost their lives, an estimated 300 000 were injured, and more than a million had been rendered homeless (Figure 1.1).¹ Equally devastating was the loss of Haiti's infrastructure, including most of the significant buildings and other engineered structures in Port-au-Prince (Figure 1.2).

The earthquake had a *magnitude* of 7.0 and was much smaller than many recent catastrophic earthquakes, such as those in Sumatra, Indonesia, in 2004, China in 2008, Chile in 2010, and Japan in 2011. Yet it was one of the worst natural disasters in history, with a loss of life comparable to the quake that levelled the city of Tangshan, China, in 1976, killing more than 250 000 people. The loss of life for an earthquake of this size was appalling. In comparison, the magnitude 7.1 earthquake that struck the San Francisco area in 1989 caused only 63 deaths and about 4000 injuries.²

The built environments in Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, Jérémie, Les Cayes, and other urban areas in southern Haiti suffered grievous damage. The destruction and loss of life were exacerbated by poor building materials and construction practices stemming from a lack of official building codes and insufficient attention to planning.³ Some of the problems included construction of heavy unsupported block walls; failure to use steel rods to reinforce concrete columns, walls, and floors; and use





◀ **FIGURE 1.1 EARTHQUAKE DEVASTATION IN HAITI** Unreinforced and poorly reinforced masonry and concrete slab buildings in Canapé Vert, a shantytown in the hills around Port-au-Prince, collapsed during the January 12, 2010, earthquake (*Eduardo Munoz/Landov*)

of marine sand in cement. Salt in the marine sand led to the corrosion and weakening of concrete. Buildings of all types failed—poured concrete, mortared and dry-stacked concrete blocks and stone, and scavenged wood and metal. Slums cover the slopes surrounding Port-au-Prince, which have expanded with little control in recent years due to migration of rural Haitians into the capital city. Most buildings on slopes lack proper foundations and, consequently, many slid down hillsides during the quake (Figure 1.1). Several tens of thousands of commercial buildings collapsed or were severely damaged, including Haiti’s prized Cathédrale de Port-au-Prince, the National Assembly building, Palace of Justice (Supreme

Court building), the headquarters of the United Nations Stabilization Mission, and several ministerial buildings. The prison civile de Port-au-Prince was also destroyed, allowing 4000 inmates to escape. The second floor of the presidential palace completely collapsed, leaving the third floor resting on the first (Figure 1.2).

The seaport ceased to function. Docks and piers slid into the sea, and cargo cranes fell from their footings. Damage was so extensive that vessels providing international relief were forced to dock along adjacent shores. Many roads were covered with rubble from collapsed buildings or were rendered impassable due to cracks caused by ground failure.



◀ **FIGURE 1.2 COLLAPSED BUILDING IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI** A front-end loader is ready for clean-up work in front of the destroyed National Palace in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Poor construction of even important government buildings was largely responsible for the great loss of life from the earthquake in 2010. (*St. Felix Evans*)

Although it had horrific consequences, the Haiti earthquake is not unprecedented. In an average year, about 17 earthquakes with magnitudes equal to or larger than the Haiti quake occur on Earth. Several things made this earthquake different from most quakes of similar magnitude. First, it occurred in a heavily populated area—the population of Port-au-Prince preceding the earthquake was nearly 3 million. Second, buildings in the affected area were not constructed to withstand strong seismic shaking. Access to resources is limited in Haiti, and most of those scant resources are allocated to immediate needs—food and basic shelter—rather than less pressing concerns such as disaster mitigation. Resource availability to all but a small number of Haitians is particularly low. Haiti is the poorest country in the Northern Hemisphere, with an annual income per person of only \$1300 in 2012, in comparison to Canada's per capita income of \$41 100. This situation has been made worse by Haiti's government bodies, which have long made few resources available for governance issues, including the establishment and enforcement of building standards.

The Haiti earthquake carries a strong message for people living in earthquake zones, including much of the west coast of North America. Port-au-Prince experienced earthquakes even larger than the 2010 quake in 1751 and 1770.¹ However, a disaster that took place hundreds of years ago is commonly a forgotten one. Due to lack of experience, people and governments were complacent and could not conceive of such an event happening; they were thus completely unprepared, as reflected in the poor construction practices prevalent in Haiti. Scientists have argued that an earthquake as large as the 2010 Haiti event could strike Vancouver, Seattle, or Portland, although no one knows precisely when. These cities are much better prepared than Haiti was before January 12, 2010, but how will they cope when it's their turn?

What are the lessons of the Haiti earthquake? We must design buildings to meet the highest seismic standards: doing so clearly saves lives. We also must continue to provide adequate research funding to scientists who are seeking to better understand where earthquakes occur, how large they are likely to be, and when they are likely to happen. New technologies, including satellite-based sensors, offer opportunities to “measure the pulse” of Earth and provide clues that might someday allow us to more accurately forecast or even predict quakes. Communication is also important. We must review and upgrade communication infrastructure and chain-of-command protocols in earthquake-prone areas to ensure that emergency officials receive timely information and respond quickly after an earthquake. People living close to faults must know what to do in the event of an earthquake. Public education programs must teach people

about earthquakes and provide instructions on how to prepare, how to act when the shaking starts, and what to do after it stops. One of the most important lessons of the Haiti catastrophe is that wealthy countries must help poorer ones prepare for earthquakes and other natural disasters. Canada and the United States must do more than just respond when disaster strikes—the standard approach to dealing with disasters in developing countries. A better strategy is a long-term proactive one aimed at helping poor countries develop and prepare for disasters before they occur.

The 2010 catastrophe in Haiti was largely human-caused. Had their buildings been constructed properly, the loss of life would have been much less. If Haiti were not impoverished, its buildings might have been more earthquake resistant and the country would have been better able to deal with the terrible aftermath of the earthquake, including an outbreak of cholera ten months after the earthquake.

1.1 Why Studying Natural Hazards Is Important

In the past few decades, earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes have killed several million people around the world; the average annual loss of life has been around 150 000 per year, with more than 300 000 deaths in 2005 alone. Financial loss from natural disasters now exceeds \$50 billion per year and can be as high as \$200 billion, as happened in 2005 (this figure represents direct property damage and does not include such expenses as loss of employment, mental anguish, and reduced productivity).

Four catastrophes—a cyclone accompanied by flooding in Bangladesh in 1970, earthquakes in China in 1976 and Haiti in 2010, and a tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004—claimed more than 230 000 lives each. A cyclone that struck Bangladesh in 1991 killed 145 000 people. Four years later in 1995, an earthquake in Kobe, Japan, claimed more than 5000 lives, destroyed many thousands of buildings, and caused more than \$100 billion in property damage. An earthquake in northern Pakistan in 2005 killed 86 000 people (Figure 1.3). In the same year, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and killed over 1800 people. It was the most destructive natural disaster in United States history and the deadliest hurricane since one in Florida in 1928.⁴ In 2011, the tsunami generated by a powerful earthquake off the coast of Japan claimed at least 16 000 lives. The World Bank estimated that the economic cost of this earthquake and tsunami was U.S.\$235 billion, making it the most expensive natural disaster in world history. More recently, in October 2012, superstorm Sandy devastated the northeast Atlantic coast of the United States, with damage estimated at U.S.\$75 billion.⁵ Other notable disasters in the past 20 years include catastrophic flooding in Venezuela, Bangladesh, and central Europe; the strongest El Niño on record; deadly earthquakes



◀ **FIGURE 1.3 DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE** People search for victims in the rubble of a 10-storey building in Islamabad, Pakistan, that collapsed during a large earthquake in 2005. About 86 000 people died and 3 million more were left homeless. (Warrick Page/Getty Images)

in Chile, India, Iran, Italy, New Zealand, and Turkey; a Category 5 hurricane in Central America; record-setting wildfires in British Columbia, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Utah; and a crippling ice storm in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and New England. During this period, Earth also experienced many of the warmest years of the past century—and probably even of the past millennium.

These events are the result of enormous forces that are at work both inside and on the surface of our planet. In this book, we explain these forces and their impacts on people and property. We also discuss how we can better prepare for natural disasters, thus minimizing their impact when they do occur.

All areas of Canada and the United States are at risk from at least one hazardous natural process.^{6,7} Parts of western North America are prone to earthquakes and landslides and experience rare volcanic eruptions; the Pacific coast is vulnerable to tsunamis; the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts are threatened by hurricanes; forested areas of the continent are prone to wildfires; the mid-continent, from Texas to Ontario, is at risk from tornadoes and blizzards; and drought and flooding can occur almost anywhere. No area is considered hazard-free.

Loss of life from natural disasters in Canada has been decreasing in recent decades, although economic losses have increased. The current low loss of life is due, in part, to land-use planning, education, and high engineering standards. Canada also has been fortunate in having experienced few large natural disasters of the scope of Hurricane Katrina in the United States, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the flood in Pakistan in 2010.

Hazardous Natural Processes and Energy Sources

In our discussion of natural hazards, we will use the word *process* to mean the ways in which events, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, landslides, and floods, affect Earth's

surface. All of these processes are driven by energy, and this energy is derived from three sources.

The first source of energy is Earth's internal heat, which produces slow convection in the solid but plastic mantle. The hazardous processes associated with this source of energy are earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. As we will see, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are explained by the theory of *plate tectonics*, one of the basic unifying theories of science. Most earthquakes and active volcanoes occur at boundaries of tectonic plates, which are large blocks of Earth's crust.

The second source of energy is the sun. Energy from the sun warms Earth's atmosphere and surface, producing winds and causing evaporation of water. Circulation of the atmosphere and oceans and evaporation of water determine Earth's climate and drive the hydrologic cycle. These forces are, in turn, directly related to hazardous processes such as violent storms, floods, and coastal erosion. Solar energy is also ultimately responsible for wildfires and lightning.

The third source of energy is the gravitational attraction of Earth. Gravity is the force that attracts one body to another—in this case, the attraction of surface materials toward the centre of Earth. Because of gravitational attraction, rocks, soils, and snow on mountainsides and the water that falls as precipitation move downslope. Earth's gravitational field also attracts objects from space that can enter the atmosphere and explode or strike the surface of the planet.

The amount of energy released by natural processes differs greatly. The average tornado expends about 1000 times as much energy as a single lightning bolt, and Earth receives nearly a trillion times more solar energy each day than it receives from a lightning bolt. However, keep in mind that a lightning bolt's energy is focused at a point—a tree, for example—whereas solar energy is spread over the entire globe.

Events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, and fires are natural processes that have been occurring on Earth's surface for billions of years. They become hazardous only when they threaten human beings.

We use the terms *hazard*, *risk*, *disaster*, and *catastrophe* to describe our interaction with these natural processes.

Of course, not all hazards are natural. Many hazards are caused by people; examples include pandemics, warfare, and technological disasters such as regional power failures. The early 2009 outbreak in humans of a new strain of influenza that is endemic in pigs (H1N1 or “swine flu”) is an example of a non-natural hazard. The virus rapidly spread around the world and was labelled a pandemic by the World Health Organization in June 2008. The Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986, which resulted in the release of large quantities of radioactive particles into the atmosphere that spread over much of western Russia and Europe, is an example of a technological disaster.

Over the past century, the distinction between natural and human-induced hazards has become blurred, and technological disasters are increasing as the world’s population grows and state economies become increasingly connected and interdependent. Social and technological hazards are important and interesting in their own right, but are beyond the scope of this book. Our focus is on hazardous solid Earth and atmospheric processes.

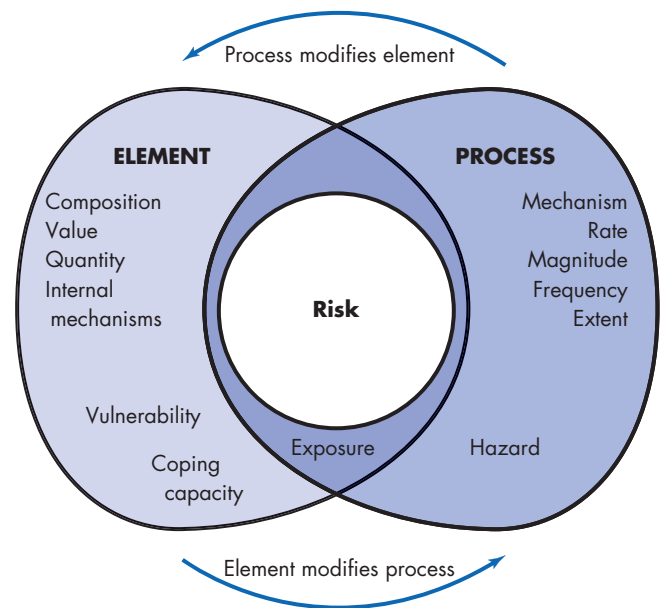
Hazard, Risk, Disaster, and Catastrophe

This book considers hazards within the human context: it focuses on the science of natural hazards and explores the social, economic, and political issues that hazards pose. The text recognizes that the human response to threats posed by natural hazards is just as important as hazard science itself.

Before discussing specific natural hazards, we need to define several key terms. **Hazard** is the probability that a specific damaging event will happen within a particular period of time.⁸ This definition is common to both the natural and social sciences. **Risk**, on the other hand, is commonly a subject of social sciences because it is rooted not only in hazard but in vulnerability and coping capacity (Figure 1.4).^{9,10,11} Definitions of risk are legion, but for our purposes, risk can be expressed by the following function:

$$\text{Risk} = f(\text{hazard, exposure, vulnerability, coping capacity})$$

Although risk can be conceptualized as a function of these four factors, their interrelationships cannot be described in mathematical terms or even fully understood. *Vulnerability* and *coping capacity* are latent states of the people and property that are at risk and are only manifested through the occurrence of a hazardous event. Vulnerability is the susceptibility of people and property to a hazardous event and is commonly thought of as having technological and human dimensions. Technological aspects are studied by engineers and geoscientists and include primary damage and life loss. Human aspects relate to a wide range of social issues, including loss of livelihood, physical displacement, and psychological and environmental impacts of hazardous events. Coping capacity is the ability of a population to respond to and reduce the negative effects of a hazardous event. *Exposure* is the overlap in space and time of a hazardous process and infrastructure or population.

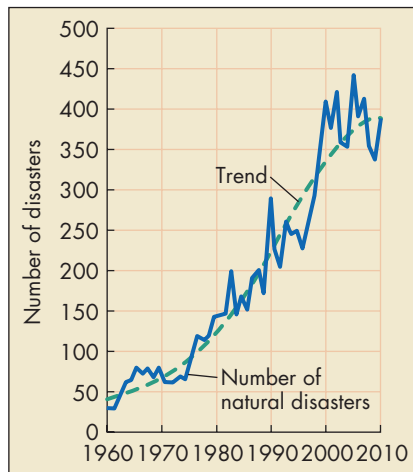


▲ **FIGURE 1.4 CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RISK** Risk is a function of four factors—hazard, vulnerability, coping capacity, and exposure. (From Clague, J. J., and N. J. Roberts. 2012. “Landslide hazard and risk.” In *Landslides: Types, Mechanisms and Modeling*, eds. J. J. Clague and D. Stead, pp. 1–9. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with permission.)

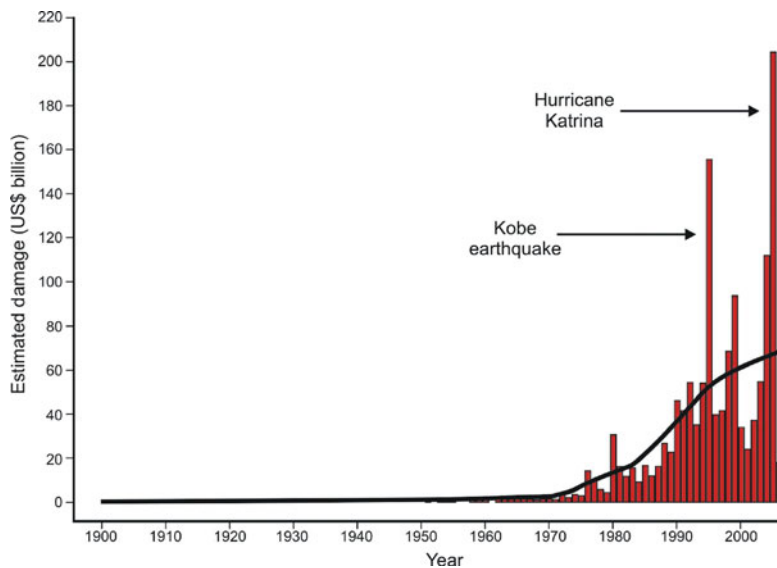
The terms **disaster**, or *natural disaster*, and **catastrophe** refer to events that cause serious injury, loss of life, and property damage over a limited time and within a specific geographic area. Although the distinction between disaster and catastrophe is somewhat vague, the latter is more massive and affects a larger number of people and more infrastructure. Disasters may be regional or even national in scope, whereas catastrophes commonly have consequences far beyond the area that is directly affected and require huge expenditures of time and money for recovery. Examples of catastrophes are the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004, Hurricane Katrina in August 2004, and the Haiti earthquake in January 2010.

The United Nations (UN) designated the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Hazards Reduction. The objectives of the UN program were to minimize loss of life and property damage from natural disasters, but the objectives were not met; rather, losses from disasters increased dramatically in the 1990s (Figure 1.5), along with similar economic losses (Figure 1.6). Achieving the UN objectives will require education and large expenditures of money to mitigate specific hazards and contain diseases that accompany disasters and catastrophes.¹²

The term **mitigation** is used by scientists, planners, and policymakers when describing efforts to prepare for disasters and to minimize their harmful effects. Mitigation can be defined as actions taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards. For example, buildings in an earthquake-prone area can be retrofitted to better withstand seismic ground motions and thus reduce the risk to occupants during a future quake.



◀ **FIGURE 1.5 INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF NATURAL DISASTERS** The number of natural disasters is increasing. Here, an event is considered a natural disaster if one of the following four criteria is met: 10 or more people are killed; 100 or more people are affected; a state of emergency is declared; or international assistance is requested. (Based on Guha-Sapir, D., and P. Hoyola. 2012. *Measuring the Human and Economic Impact of Disasters*. UK: Government Office for Science)



◀ **FIGURE 1.6 THE RISING COST OF NATURAL DISASTERS** Estimated damage (in billions of U.S. dollars) caused by natural disasters between 1900 and 2007. (Data from EM-DAT, the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database)

Death and Damage Caused by Natural Hazards

Worldwide, flooding is the largest killer of people, followed by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and windstorms. Since 1974, about 2.5 million people have died in natural disasters. Most deaths were in developing countries. Asia has suffered the greatest losses, with about three-quarters of the total deaths and nearly one-half of the economic losses. Loss of life and economic loss could have even been worse were it not for improvements in warning systems, disaster preparedness, and emergency response.^{13,14}

Natural hazards that cause the greatest loss of life in North America are not the same as those that cause the most property damage. Tornadoes and windstorms cause the largest number of deaths in most years, although lightning, floods,

and hurricanes also take a heavy toll (Table 1.1). Loss of life from earthquakes in North America is surprisingly low, largely because buildings are constructed to a high standard. However a single large earthquake can cause tremendous property damage. For example, the Northridge earthquake in Los Angeles in 1994 caused U.S.\$20–30 billion in property damage but killed only 60 people. The next great earthquake in a densely populated part of California could cause more than U.S.\$100 billion in damage.¹²

Natural disasters cost Canada and the United States tens of billions of dollars annually. Because populations are increasing in high-risk areas of North America, we can expect losses to increase significantly in the future. Floods, landslides, expansive soils that shrink and swell, and frost each cause in excess of U.S.\$1.5 billion in damage each year in the United States alone.

TABLE 1.1 Effects of Selected Hazards in Canada and the United States

Hazard	Deaths per Year	Catastrophe Potential
Flood	100	High
Earthquake ^a	>50	High
Landslide	30	Low
Snow avalanche	20	Low
Volcanic eruption ^a	<1	High
Coastal erosion	0	Low
Soil expansion	0	Very low
Hurricane	60	High
Tornado and windstorm	220	High
Lightning	125	Very low
Drought	0	Medium
Heat wave	100s	High
Wildfire ^b	<10	High
Freezing and frozen rain	<10	Medium
Permafrost thaw	0	High
Extraterrestrial impact	0	Very high

^a Estimates based on recent or predicted loss over a 150-year period. Actual losses differ considerably from year to year and could be much greater in a given year.

^b Most deaths are firefighters.

Source: Adapted from White, G. F., and J. E. Haas. 1975. *Assessment of Research on Natural Hazards*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Reprinted with permission.

Note that the relations between loss of life and property damage discussed above apply only to the developed world—mainly North America, Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Natural disasters in most developing countries claim far more lives than comparable events in North America. For example, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004 killed nearly 230 000 people. In comparison, the tsunami in the North Pacific in 1964, although equal in size, killed 119 people. A notable characteristic of North American disasters, however, is their very large toll on the economy. Category 4 and 5 hurricanes typically cause billions of dollars in damage in southern U.S. states; the direct damage from Hurricane Katrina, the worst storm in U.S. history, was more than U.S.\$80 billion, and indirect damage, including lost economic activity and employment, was several times that amount.⁴

Natural hazards differ greatly in their potential to create a catastrophe, mainly because of differences in the size of the area each affects (Table 1.1). Three processes—climate change, eruptions of super volcanoes, and large meteorite impacts—can have global repercussions. Large tsunamis, earthquakes, major volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, monsoon floods, and floods on large rivers have regional effects and may result in catastrophes. Landslides, snow avalanches, floods on small rivers, most wildfires, and tornadoes generally affect small areas and thus are rarely catastrophic. Coastal erosion, lightning, expansive soils, and permafrost thaw do not create catastrophes, but still cause much damage.¹⁵

Risks associated with natural hazards change with time because of changes in population and land use. As cities grow,

neighbourhoods may extend onto hazardous land, such as steep hillsides and floodplains. Such expansion is a serious problem in many large, rapidly growing cities in developing nations. Urbanization alters drainage, increases the steepness of some slopes, and removes vegetation. Agriculture, forestry, and mining also remove natural vegetation and can increase erosion and sedimentation. Overall, damage from most hazardous natural processes in Canada is increasing, but the number of deaths from many hazards is decreasing because of better planning, forecasting, warning, and engineering.

1.2 Magnitude and Frequency of Hazardous Events

The *impact* of a hazardous event is partly a function of its magnitude—the size of an event or the amount of energy released—and partly a function of frequency. The *magnitude–frequency concept* asserts that an inverse exponential relationship exists between the magnitude of an event and its frequency (Figure 1.7). Large floods or earthquakes, for example, are infrequent, whereas small floods or earthquakes are common. The *recurrence interval*, also known as the return period, is the average time separating two events of the same magnitude. The magnitude–frequency relation for many natural phenomena can be approximated by an exponential equation of the type $M = Fe^{-x}$, where M is the magnitude of the event, F is the frequency, e is the base of the natural logarithm, and x is a constant.