

Natural Hazards Maps Published in 1999



Over the years, Canada has been the setting for many natural disasters that have directly or indirectly affected most of the population at least once in their lifetime. Canada is still vulnerable to such catastrophes, many of which have been or will be as serious as any occurring elsewhere in the world. For instance, the Queen Charlotte Islands have been struck by an earthquake, Edmonton was hit by a tornado, Frank, Alberta and Saint-Jean-Vianney, Quebec have experienced devastating landslides, and a host of fires rage through Canada's forests every summer. It is also true that the cumulative effects of minor but frequent disasters can sometimes cause more damage and have as much impact on the population as one major catastrophe.

Natural disasters have a wide variety of causes. Some are climate-related (such as tornadoes, hurricanes, wind storms, hail, sea fog, ice or freezing rain), some are caused by specifically geological events (earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, volcanic eruptions or tsunamis), and others have a variety of causes (forest fires or floods). As well, one catastrophe often creates a situation leading to another disaster: by destroying the vegetation on the flanks of mountains, forest fires can cause landslides; and hurricanes can result in flooding.

Natural disasters can strike with lightning speed or they may build up over a long period of time. Their arsenal includes water, fire, air, earth, and they are aided by cold, heat, gravity and other powerful forces of nature.