

Natural Disasters

A natural disaster is a sudden and extreme event caused by nature. Some are caused by changes in the weather; others are caused by the earth's movements.

An earthquake is when the ground suddenly shakes because the Earth's surface is moving. This happens deep underground, where big pieces of the Earth, called tectonic plates, slowly push against each other.

Some areas are more affected by natural disasters because they are located on points of the earth where lots of tectonic plates meet.



A volcano is a mountain that can erupt, sending out hot, melted rock called lava, along with ash and gases, from deep inside the Earth. Volcanoes form because the Earth's surface has cracks, and sometimes pressure builds up underneath. When the pressure gets too strong, the volcano erupts.

A tsunami is a huge wave that happens in the ocean, usually caused by an underwater earthquake. When the ground under the sea suddenly moves, it pushes a large amount of water, creating a series of powerful waves.



Natural disasters can affect people in many serious ways. They can damage homes, schools, and buildings, leaving people without a safe place to live. After a disaster, it often takes time for communities to rebuild and recover. In some areas, people build special buildings which can withstand disasters.

Key Vocabulary

Natural disaster- A sudden and extreme event caused by nature.

Volcano- A mountain that can erupt, sending out hot lava, ash, and gases from inside the Earth.

Earthquake- A sudden shaking of the ground caused by the movement of the Earth's tectonic plates.

Hurricane- A powerful storm with strong winds and heavy rain that forms over warm ocean waters.

Flood- When too much water covers the land, often caused by heavy rain, storms, or overflowing rivers.

Tsunami- A series of huge waves in the ocean, usually caused by an underwater earthquake or volcanic eruption.

Tectonic plate- A large piece of the Earth's crust that moves slowly. When plates collide or slide past each other, they can cause earthquakes and volcanoes.

Richter Scale- A number scale used to measure the strength of an earthquake. The higher the number, the stronger the earthquake.

Ring of Fire- A huge area around the Pacific Ocean where many earthquakes and volcanoes happen because of moving tectonic plates.

Erupt- When a volcano explodes, sending out lava, ash, and gases.

Lava- Hot, melted rock that flows from a volcano during an eruption.

Recover- To fix and rebuild things after a natural disaster and help people return to normal life.