

What is a hazard?

A hazard is a phenomenon or a process, either natural or human-made, that can endanger a group of people, their belongings and their environment, if they do not take precautions.

There are different types of hazards. Some are natural while others are caused by human beings, such as so-called industrial or technological hazards (explosions, fires, toxic chemical spillages). Wars and terrorism are also hazards caused by human beings.



Among various natural hazards, we can identify:



Earthquakes, earth tremors: Violent shaking or jolt of the earth's surface due to movements originating from deep underground, which can cause a lot of damage.



Plagues: A widespread catastrophe that afflicts a whole town or a community caused, for instance, by huge numbers of insects or animals that destroy crops.



Volcanic eruptions: Explosions or emissions of lava, ashes and toxic gases from deep inside the earth, expelled through volcanoes.



Droughts: A period of time (months or years) during which a part of the land suffers from lack of rain, causing severe damage to the soil, crops, animals, and even people, sometimes causing death.



Landslides, mudslides: Soil, rocks and debris that move suddenly or slowly down a slope. They mainly happen during the rainy season or during times of seismic activity.



Floods: The building up of large quantities of water, generally caused by heavy rains which the soil is unable to absorb.



Tsunamis: Gigantic wave or series of waves that smash into the shore, caused by an earthquake, volcanic eruptions or landslides under the sea.



Wildfires: Destructive fires in forests and other areas covered by vegetation. These fires can get out of control and easily spread over vast areas of land.



Hurricanes: Strong winds that start over the sea, rotating in big whirling circles, and bringing rain with them. They are also known as tropical cyclones.



Tornadoes: Very violent gusts of whirling, funnel-shaped winds which spin along over the ground.

These hazards can turn into disasters, but only under certain conditions. Do you know what these conditions are?