



## Natural Disasters

One of the most amazing things about nature is that people have almost no control over what happens. People can't stop the rain from falling, the tides from changing at the beach, or the sun from shining during the day. Many times, the unexpected parts of nature, like a flower blooming or a tree swaying in the wind, are quite beautiful, but there are also some unexpected parts of nature that can be very scary. **Natural disasters** are natural weather events that cause great damage and sometimes result in the loss of lives. Natural disasters are similar to severe weather, but they generally affect more people or a larger area of land than severe weather does. Some examples of severe weather are hurricanes, thunderstorms, and tornados, while natural disasters include more wide-scale, drastic events such as droughts, floods, wildfires, earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.

Water is essential for people, plants, and animals to survive. When there is not enough rainfall in an area for an extended period of time, the water level in bodies of water like rivers and lakes can drop significantly. This is called a **drought**. Droughts can occur anywhere in the world at any time, but people increase the likelihood of a drought occurring when they use too much water. In addition to causing a decrease in the water level of certain bodies of water, droughts can also lead to wildfires or landslides.

**TIP:** Don't keep the water running while you are brushing your teeth because this **conserves**, or saves and protects, water!

The opposite of a drought is a flood. You just learned that a drought is when an area does not have enough water for an extended period of time. A **flood**, on the other hand, is when an area receives way too much water at one time. Floods that happen very suddenly with very little warning are called a **flash flood**. Most floods either happen after a heavy rain takes place or when a steady rain lasts for a long period of time, but floods can also happen during winter if a large amount of snow melts very quickly. Tsunamis and earthquakes often create large ocean waves which can lead to flooding when they reach the shore.

**TIP:** Don't be fooled into thinking that the water on the ground during a flood is not dangerous. This water is often much deeper than you think and has a strong current (which means it's moving) like the ocean.

Similar to flooding, **wildfires**, or uncontrollable fires that occur in the wilderness, can happen very quickly and cover a great deal of land. Wildfires usually happen in forests or out in the countryside as a result of natural causes such as lightning or volcanic eruptions, but they can also occur from manmade causes like careless campers. Although it is uncommon, extremely dry leaves in your yard or in the forest can start a wildfire if they got too hot. Wildfires can happen almost anywhere at any time, but they usually happen in dry places in the summer when there is lots of heat and very little water.

**TIP:** Never play with matches because fires start easily and spread quickly.

Another "hot" natural disaster is a **volcanic eruption**, which is when melted rock from underneath the earth's surface pours out of a volcano. Volcanoes are mountains that open up to earth's surface. When enough pressure builds up underneath the earth's surface, volcanoes



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erupt! Hot molten lava pours down the sides of the volcano as it is erupting, often flowing a great distance and destroying anything in its path. Lava is extraordinarily hot and has the potential to start wildfires. Volcanic eruptions can also cause earthquakes and avalanches. Thankfully, **active volcanoes** are the usually the only type of volcano that erupts. **Dormant volcanoes** are volcanoes that have not erupted in many years, and **extinct volcanoes** are volcanoes that have erupted in the past but have no chance of erupting again. If you're ever traveling near a volcano, make sure you know which type of volcano it is!

**TIP:** Avoid making phone calls during an emergency because your call might tie up a line that an emergency worker needs to use. Sending text messages is a great alternative to calling.

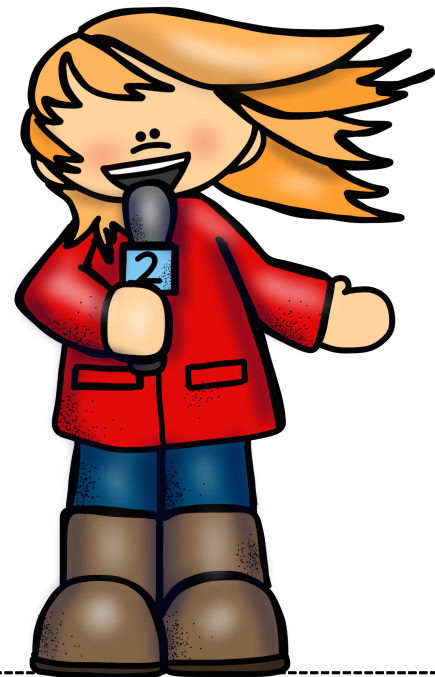
Although some earthquakes happen as a result of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes often happen on their own. An **earthquake** is the sudden shaking of earth's surface that comes without warning. Sometimes earthquakes are so subtle that you could be standing on the ground where one occurs and never realize it, but some earthquakes are so strong that they can destroy buildings, villages, houses, and other landforms. Scientists still don't know exactly how to predict when an earthquake will happen, but they do know that earthquakes always happen over **fault lines**, or cracks in earth's surface. Earthquakes can happen at any point during the year.

**TIP:** Respond to an earthquake in a similar way that you would respond to a tornado or a thunderstorm. Drop to the ground, hide as much of your body under sturdy furniture as possible, and grab onto something stable until the shaking ends. Fortunately, some earthquakes can be as short as one minute long.

Landslides can be caused by all kinds of things, including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, heavy rainfall, fast-melting snow, and erosion. A **landslide** is a massive downward movement of rock and dirt. The conditions for a landslide are ideal when a cliff or slope becomes flooded with too much water. Landslides can vary in size and severity. These scary sliding masses of earth usually pick up speed as they collect more debris along their path, and some recent landslides have killed over 500 people. Unfortunately, almost any place in the world is susceptible to a landslide.

**TIP:** Just like when you get caught in a rip tide (a very strong current of water) at the beach, the best way to react if you are caught in a landslide is to not fight it. Curl into a ball low to the ground and try to avoid the large debris that is rolling in the landslide.

Although people have no control over severe weather and natural disasters, they can know how to react if it does occur. Research the weather history of your town or state, and find out what types of natural disasters are likely to occur where you live so you can make sure you know how to be prepared for them!



**TEXT-BASED EVIDENCE QUESTIONS****Natural Disasters**

**Directions:** Answer these questions after you read the passage. Remember to begin your answer by restating part of the question, use direct evidence from the text, and explain your thinking.

**KEY IDEAS & DETAILS**

1. According to the first paragraph of the text, what is one of the most amazing things about nature? **RI.1**

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2. Describe what happens when there is a lack of rainfall. **RI.3**

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3. Describe what happens when there is an excess of rainfall (too much). **RI.3**

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4. Explain what causes a volcanic eruption. **RI.3**

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5. Summarize what you read about earthquakes. **RI.2**

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**TEXT-BASED EVIDENCE QUESTIONS****Natural Disasters**

**Directions:** Answer these questions after you read the passage. Remember to begin your answer by restating part of the question, use direct evidence from the text, and explain your thinking.

**CRAFT & STRUCTURE**

6. Explain the meaning of the phrase "landslide." **RI.4**

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7. How is the passage organized? (Chronological, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, description, problem/solution). Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. **RI.5**

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**INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS**

8. What is the key idea that the author wants readers to understand from this text? Use evidence from the text to support your reasoning. **RI.8**

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