

Geography Knowledge Organiser - Year 5 - Natural Disasters

natural disaster	a natural event that causes great damage or loss of life
flood	when water submerges land which is usually dry
hurricane	a huge, rapidly rotating storm
earthquake	a violent jolt which shakes the land, caused by the Earth's tectonic plates sliding past each other
tsunami	a long, high sea wave caused by an earthquake or volcano under the sea
heatwave	a period of excessively hot weather
drought	prolonged shortage of water
climate	the weather conditions in an area in general or over a long period
bushfire	a fire in a forest, especially one that spreads rapidly

Floods

Floods can be caused by many different factors:

- Excessive rainfall in a short period of time
- Overflowing rivers (caused by heavy rain or a ruptured dam)
- Rapidly melting snow or ice
- Coastal flooding (when a storm or tsunami causes the sea to surge inland)

This is the most common natural disaster to occur in the UK.



E.g. Cumbria (UK) - 2009

Hurricane

A hurricane is a huge rapidly rotating storm.

- Wind speeds range from 74mph to 200mph.
- They usually last for over a week.
- They use warm, moist air as fuel so often form over the ocean near the equator.
- An 'eye' forms in the centre, which is very clear and calm.
- They often weaken when they hit land, because they are not being 'fed' by warm ocean waters.



E.g. Hurricane Katrina (USA) - 2005

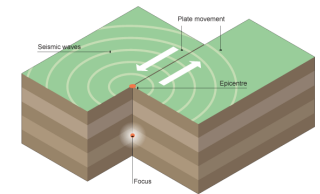
Earthquake

An earthquake happens when the Earth's tectonic plates meet and cause friction or a build up of pressure.

Most earthquakes are minor (small) but a major (large) earthquake can cause a lot of destruction.

Where earthquakes are common, people take precautions:

- They don't make buildings very tall
- They use rubber foundations.
- They use plastic in windows instead of glass.



Tsunami

- A tsunami is caused by an earthquake or volcano under the sea.
- When an earthquake lifts or drops part of the ocean floor, the water above rises and starts spreading across the ocean.
- Tsunami waves start at about 1 metre high, but they can grow to 35 metres or higher (the same as a 10-floor block of flats).



E.g. Indian Ocean—2004

Heatwave

- A heatwave is a period of excessively hot weather. It can have devastating effects on people, animals and crops.
- Extreme heat can lead to other natural disasters such as droughts, wildfires and bushfires.
- Water shortages make it difficult to grow crops, which can lead to hunger crises where there is not enough food for the population.



Bushfire

E.g. Australia—2019 & 2020

- The Australian bushfires in 2019 & 2020 were thought to have been caused by lightning.
- The ongoing drought in Eastern Australia was a big cause of the spread of the fire because the bush was extremely dry and flammable.
- Climate change is thought to be a large factor in the increase of bushfires. Australia has seen decreases in average rainfall in the south-east of the country since 1990.

