

Major U.S.A. Natural Disasters

I. Earthquakes

- 1811-12 New Madrid, Missouri (series with maximum of R8.8, deaths unknown)
- 1906 San Francisco, California (R8.3, 503 deaths)
- 1964 Anchorage, Alaska (R8.4, 131 deaths)
- 1971 San Fernando Valley, California (R6.6, 65 deaths)
- 1989 San Francisco, California (R7.1, 67 deaths)
- 1994 Northridge, California (R7.1, 61 deaths) (most costly earthquake in U.S.A. history - \$30 billion)

Sources: Adapted from Borgna Brunner (ed.). 2001. *Time Almanac 2002*. Boston: Information Please, pp. 614-615; Mark S. Hoffman (ed.). 1993. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. New York: World Almanac, p. 578; and Thomas E. Drabek. 1996. *Disaster Evacuation Behavior: Tourists and Other Transients*. Boulder, Colorado: Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, p. 55.

II. Floods

- 1889 Johnstown, Pennsylvania (2,289 deaths)
- 1972 Buffalo Creek, West Virginia (118 deaths)
- 1972 Rapid City, South Dakota (236 deaths)
- 1976 Big Thompson Canyon, Colorado (139 deaths)
- 1993 Midwest (Mississippi Valley [50 deaths] (Most costly flood in U.S.A. history - \$12-16 billion)
- 1997 California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Nevada (36 deaths; \$2-3 billion in damages; December 1996 – January 1997)
- 1997 Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia (67 deaths; \$1 billion in damages; flooding and tornadoes)

Sources: Adapted from Mark S. Hoffman (ed.). 1993. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. New York: World Almanac, p. 575; Dennis S. Mileti. 1999. *Disasters By Design: A Reassessment of Natural Hazards in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Joseph Henry Press, p. 91; and Borgna Brunner (ed.). 2001. *Time Almanac 2002*. Boston: Information Please, p. 616.

III. Hurricanes

- 1900 Galveston, Texas (6,000 deaths)
- 1954 Hurricane Hazel (347 deaths) (Georgia – South Carolina)
- 1961 Hurricane Carla (46 deaths) (Texas)
- 1969 Hurricane Camille (256 deaths) (Mississippi – Louisiana)
- 1972 Hurricane Agnes (117 deaths) (Florida to New York)
- 1989 Hurricane Hugo (49 deaths) (South Carolina) \$9 billion in damages
- 1992 Hurricane Andrew (15 deaths) (Florida – Louisiana) \$30 billion in damages
- 1992 Hurricane Iniki (6 deaths) (Hawaii) \$2 billion in damages
- 1996 Hurricane Fran (37 deaths) (North and South Carolina) \$5 billion in damages
- 1999 Hurricane Floyd (75 deaths) (North and South Carolina) \$6 billion in damages
- 2001 Tropical Storm Allison (27 deaths) (Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Virginia, and Pennsylvania)

Sources: Adapted from Borgna Brunner. 2001. *Time Almanac 2002*. Boston: Information Please, pp. 610 and 617; Mark S. Hoffman (ed.). 1993. *The World Almanac*, p. 575; *1997 Britannica Book of the Year*. 1997. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., p. 60, 165; *2000 Britannica Book of the Year*. 2000. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., p. 163; *Newsweek*, October 4, 1999, p. 46; *2002 Britannica Book of the Year*. 2002. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., p. 64.

IV. Tornadoes

- 1925 689 deaths; tornadoes struck in the states of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana (referred to as “The Tri-state Tornado”; highest death toll in U.S.A. history)
- 1936 216 deaths; Tupelo, Mississippi
- 1936 203 deaths; Gainesville, Georgia
- 1947 181 deaths; Woodward, Oklahoma
- 1965 271 deaths; states of Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin
- 1971 110 deaths, Mississippi delta
- 1974 350 deaths, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky
- 1985 90 deaths, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Ontario, Canada
- 1987 29 deaths, Saragosa, Texas
- 1999 41 deaths, Oklahoma and Kansas
- 2000 18 deaths, Georgia
- 2002 35 deaths, 70 or more tornadoes impacting Tennessee, Alabama, Ohio, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere.

Sources: Adapted from Borgna Brunner. 2001. *Time Almanac 2002*. Boston: Information Please, p. 618; Mark S. Hoffman (ed.). 1993. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. New York: World Almanac, p. 574; Federal Emergency Management Agency. 1999. *Midwest Tornadoes of May 3, 1999: Observations, Recommendations, and Technical Guidance*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Emergency Management Agency; *2001 Britannica Book of the Year*. 2001. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., p. 58; and *The Denver Post*, November 12, 2002, p.1.

V. Tsunamis

- 1812 Santa Barbara, California (off shore earthquake) 30 ft. high waves
- 1868 Hilo, Hawaii (Peru/Chili earthquake) 30 ft. high waves; 2 boats carried inland
- 1946 Wainaku, Hawaii (Aleutian Islands earthquake) 55 ft. high waves; 173 deaths

1964 Crescent City, California and Valdez, Alaska (Alaska earthquake); 122 deaths

Source: *TsuInfo Alert*. 1999. 1 (December):8.

VI. Wildfires

1871 Peshtigo, Wisconsin (1,200 deaths; 4 million acres burned; worst wildfire in terms of deaths in U.S.A. history)

1894 Minnesota (600 deaths; 160,000 acres burned including six towns)

1918 Minnesota and Wisconsin (1,000 deaths including 400 in town of Cloquet, Minnesota)

1956 California (11 deaths; 40,000 acres burned in Cleveland National Forest)

1991 Oakland-Berkeley, California (24 deaths; over 3,000 homes; \$1.5 billion in damages)

2000 Los Alamos, New Mexico (250 homes destroyed; 47,000 acres burned; 20,000 people evacuated and Los Alamos National Laboratory threatened)

2000 Numerous large fires in Alaska, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming (6.5 million acres or more burned)

2002 Numerous large fires throughout western states including areas near Show Low, Arizona (nearly 400,000 acres); Denver, Colorado (including Snaking, Schoonover and Hayman Fires totaling over 100,000 acres); Durango, Colorado (including Missionary Ridge Fire which exceeded 27,000 acres)

Sources: Borgna Brunner (ed.). 2001. *Time Almanac 2002*. Boston: Information Please, p. 619; *The Denver Post*, June 26, 2002, p. 13A; *Rocky Mountain News*, May 23, 2002, p. 5A; and *Rocky Mountain News*, June 17, 2002, pp. 4A-9A.