

NATURAL DISASTERS: A SURVEY



People in the world experienced numerous natural disasters in the past decade and many of them lost their loved ones in them. A survey that shows precisely how many people lost their lives in such disasters has been done.

Ubyrisk Consultants, a firm specializing in studying and management of natural disasters, has been taking records of all natural disasters that have happened in the world since January 1, 2001. **From 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2010, no fewer than 7,563 natural disasters were recorded in the world, an average of 756 incidents per year.**

In the long term (30 years), it appears that the decade 2001-2010 is by far the one with the most unfortunate events. In terms of frequency, 1,822 incidents were recorded. Almost a quarter of the disasters were floods followed by forest fires (893 incidents, nearly 12% of total) and thunderstorms with lightning (819 incidents, nearly 11%). With 2,250 recorded incidents, Asia is the continent most frequently hit by various disasters, closely followed by the Americas (2118 incidents) and Europe (2005 incidents).

The total of 576,474 deaths that were recorded in the past decade were caused mainly by earthquakes (46% of victims). Tsunamis took the second place with 271,775 deaths (22% of total) followed by hurricanes and tropical storms that killed 229,037 people (18.4% of total). During the decade 2001-2010, tsunamis are clearly overrepresented which is due to the tsunami that hit Indonesia in December 2004 and that alone killed 270,000 people. Heat waves with 92,674 victims (7.5% of total) occupy the third place of the most deadly natural events; floods which caused 55,049 deaths (4.5% of total) follow.

Most of the deaths caused by natural disasters happened in Asia since 65% of victims (793,312 dead) were recorded there. The Americas (both North and South) came second with 27.6% of victims (343,907 dead) and Europe took the third place with 7.5% of victims (92,379 dead). The Americas taking the second place is partly due to the earthquake that occurred in Haiti in January 2010 and that killed 316,000 people.

These figures demonstrate the extreme human vulnerability of developing countries as natural disasters in developing countries take its toll mainly on human lives, whereas in developed countries, the consequences of such disasters are mostly financial.

Date: 2011-03-28

Article link:

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