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)


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 Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia (67 deaths; $1 billion in damages; flooding and tornadoes)
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)


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.


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


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)