



OUR ENVIRONMENT

(PART OF THE WORLD SCOUT ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME WSEP)

Guess the Disaster

The causes of natural disasters are many. Human activities play a role in the frequency and severity of disasters. A natural disaster is a disruption in the balance of the environment. The human factor raises the cost, in both property damage and loss of life. Understanding the causes of natural disaster can provide clues to their prevention.



Floods

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), fire and floods are the most common natural disaster affecting Americans. Floods are a factor in 90% of natural disasters. Flood events have both natural and man-made causes. Storm events can create flood waters that exceed the capacity of the environment or man-made structures. Levees and dams provide a false sense of security as it had become evident during the Great Flood of 1993 in the Upper Mississippi River valley. A painful lesson was learned. Wetlands destruction removed a natural means to absorb floodwaters.





Fires

Fires are nature's environmental managers. They create and maintain ecosystems such as prairies and pine forests. In fact, prairies evolved with the presence of fire. The health of the ecosystem is dependent on this disturbance. Fires remove a build up of litter on the soil surface, allowing nutrients to be released into the environment. It also creates favourable conditions for seed germination. Suppression of fire allows litter to accumulate, setting the stage for catastrophic fires. Plants and trees have adapted to the presence of fire. However, the higher temperatures of crown fires can kill plants entirely. These fires are more difficult to control. Suppression of fires is expensive, upward of \$1 billion annually, according to the U.S. Forest Service.



Drought

Drought has had more widespread effects than any other natural disaster. Each year, drought costs the United States more than \$6 billion. It is safe to say that droughts have greater impacts in modern times. More people are affected by loss of land and food crops as well as environmental damage. The immediate effects are overshadowed by secondary issues. Compacted, dry soils are vulnerable to topsoil loss and erosion. Dry conditions make fires more common. Evidence suggest global warming may be the cause for an increase in drought frequency and changes in the global climate.





Weather Events

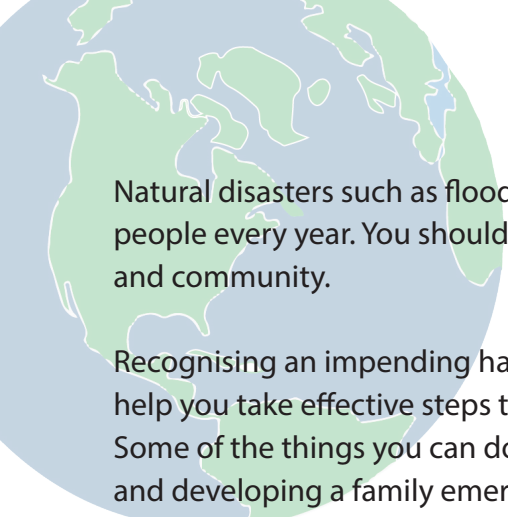
Like drought, an increase in severe weather events has been recorded in the last 100 years by the National Climatic Data Centre. While notification systems are in place, vulnerabilities still exist for property damage and crop loss. Development has also complicated the effects of such events. An increase in development leads to a decrease in wetlands and an increase in impervious surfaces such as roads and driveways. This creates a scenario for floods and flash flooding. As with drought, scientists believe a link between global warming and climate changes exists.



Prevention / Solution

Not all natural disasters can be prevented. Each natural disaster has its own factors and complications. Understanding the basic principles of ecology can provide keys to lessening their effects. Nature evolved with natural disasters and disturbance. The best prevention is looking at the strategies found in nature.





Natural disasters such as flood, fire, earthquake, tornado and windstorm affect thousands of people every year. You should know what your risks are and prepare to protect yourself, your family and community.

Recognising an impending hazard and knowing what to do to protect yourself and your family will help you take effective steps to prepare beforehand and aid recovery after the event.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family emergency plan, are the same for all types of hazards. However each emergency is unique and knowing the actions to take for each threat will impact the specific decisions and preparations you make. By learning about these specific threats, you are preparing yourself to react in an emergency.

Please go to **<http://www.ready.gov/natural-disasters>**, in order to find information about what to do before, during and after a natural disaster.

Suggestions:

- o Apart from discussing different natural disasters in which the human being has no control over (like earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, tornadoes, etc), clubs should also be made aware that certain disasters are happening more frequently or with more intensity due to man's negative impact on the environment (as explained above).



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



Activity: What disaster am I ?



Objective: Learn about natural disasters



Time: 1 Hour



Outline: Start with the game suggested in the Cub Book. An alternative to it is a form of charades, with a Cub acting out the natural disaster, and the rest of the Cubs have to guess.

Ask the Cubs which of the natural disaster they were familiar with, and give an explanation of the most common ones. The attention of the Cubs should be drawn to the fact that, although natural disasters are inevitable (like volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes), the impact of man's activities on the environment can determine the frequency and intensity of other disasters.

Visual aids like power point presentations or video clips can render the session more interesting.



Equipment: flash cards for game (a sample can be found in the resources folder); laptop/projector if visual aids are used



Place: Can be done both indoor and outdoor



Group Size: Pack



3rd Parties: N/A



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



During the Activity:

	- The impact of the natural disasters on the environment and society involve the social aspect; apart from the fact that in discussing this topic between them cubs engage in the social aspect.
	- A game can be organized to involve the physical aspect.
	- Understanding and discerning the disasters and their effect.
	- The game can help bring out the creative aspect.
	- The negative effects of the disasters and the cubs' reactions bring out their emotions.
	- The environment was given to us by our Creator and we should nurture it for future generations.

GOLD ARROW

After the Activity :

Making the cubs aware what to avoid in order to take good care of the environment so that we leave this world a better place than we found it.

