

# The Worst Natural Disasters by Death Toll

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What are the deadliest natural disasters recorded?  
A death toll is the number of dead as a result of war, violence, accident, natural disaster, extreme weather, or disease.

Below is a list of death tolls for various infamous natural disasters. Most numbers are estimates and are often in dispute. The incidents are ranked by the highest estimate given.

Some events overlap categories.

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What are the deadliest natural disasters? Top 10:

Rank	Event	Location	Date	Death Toll (Estimate)
1.	1931 Yellow River flood	Yellow River, China	Summer 1931	850,000-4,000,000
2.	1887 Yellow River flood	Yellow River, China	September-October 1887	900,000-2,000,000
3.	1970 Bhola cyclone	Ganges Delta, East Pakistan	November 13, 1970	500,000-1,000,000
4.	1201 Earthquake	Eastern Mediterranean	1201	1,000,000
5.	1938 Yellow River flood	Yellow River, China	June 9th, 1938	500,000 - 900,000
6.	Shaanxi Earthquake	Shaanxi Province, China	January 23, 1556	830,000
7.	2004 Indian Ocean earthquake/tsunami	Indian Ocean	December 26, 2004	225,000-275,000
8.	1881 Haiphong Cyclone	Haiphong, Vietnam	1881	300,000
9.	1642 Kaifeng Flood	Kaifeng, Henan Province, China	1642	300,000
10.	Tangshan Earthquake	Tangshan, China	July 28, 1976	242,000*

\* Official Government figure. Estimated death toll as high as 655,000.

What are the deadliest recorded Earthquakes?

Death Toll	Event	Location	Date	Death Toll	Event	Location	Date	Death Toll
830,000	Shaanxi earthquake	China	1556	287,000	Indian Ocean earthquake & tsunamis	outside Indonesia	2004	230,000
255,000	Tangshan earthquake	China	1976	200,000	Xining earthquake	China	1920	200,000
200,000	Aleppo earthquake	Syria	1138	200,000	Gansu earthquake	China	1920	150,000
150,000	Ardabil earthquake	Iran	893	140,000	Great Kantō earthquake	Japan	1923	110,000
110,000	Ashgabat earthquake	Turkmenistan	1948	100,000	Messina earthquake	Italy	1908	100,000
100,000	1755 Lisbon earthquake	Portugal	1755	87,000+	(still rising)	2005 Kashmir earthquake	Pakistan, India	2005
80,000	Shemakha earthquake	Caucasus	1667	77,000	Tabriz earthquake	Iran	1727	70,000
66,000	Ancash earthquake	Peru	1970	60,000	Sicily earthquake	Sicily	1693	60,000
50,000	Calabria earthquake	Italy	1783	50,000	Iran earthquake	Iran	1990	31,000
31,000	Bam earthquake	Iran	2003	32,700	Erzincan earthquake	Turkey	1939	25,000
25,000	Spitak Earthquake	Armenia	1988	23,000	Guatemala earthquake	Guatemala	1976	20,000
20,000	Gujarat earthquake	India	2001	20,000	Valparaíso earthquake	Chile	1960	17,118
15,621	Tonghai earthquake	China	1970	11,000	Naples earthquake	Italy	1857	10,700
10,700	Bihar earthquake	India	1934	10,000	Agadir earthquake	Morocco	1960	9,748
9,500	Michoacán earthquake	Mexico	1985	6,433	Great Hanshin earthquake	Kobe, Japan	1995	6,234
6,234	May 2006 Java earthquake	Yogyakarta, Indonesia	2006	3,276	Hsinchu-Taichung earthquake	Taiwan	1935	3,000
3,000	1906 San Francisco earthquake	California	1906	2,400	Chi-Chi earthquake	Taiwan	1999	2,914
2,914	Irpinia	Italy	1980	1,570	Romania earthquake	Romania	1977	1,100
1,266	Meishan earthquake	Taiwan	1905	1,000	Friuli earthquake	Italy	1976	1,084
571	Morocco earthquake	Al Hoceima Province	2004	564	Zarand	Iran	2005	258
258	Napier earthquake	New Zealand	1931	131	Good Friday Earthquake	Alaska	1964	115
115	Long Beach earthquake of 1933	California	1933	66	Loma Prieta earthquake	California	1989	65+
65+	Sylmar earthquake	California	1971	57	Northridge earthquake	California	1994	27
27	1872 Lone Pine earthquake	California	1872	13	Newcastle earthquake	Australia	1989	

Notes

A severe earthquake occurred on 5 July 1201 in the area of the eastern Mediterranean - (Upper Egypt, Syria). Every major city in the Near East was disrupted, and contemporary estimates put the total number killed at 1,100,000.

References

- USGS

What are the deadliest volcano eruptions?

Death

Toll	Event	Location	Date	92,000	Mount Tabora (see also Year Without a Summer)	Indonesia	1815
36,000	Krakatoa	Indonesia	1883	29,000	Mount Pelée	Martinique	1902
				23,000	Nevado del Ruiz		
				18,000	Mount Vesuvius	Italy	1631
				15,000	Mount Unzen	Japan	1792
				10,000			
				9,350	Laki	Iceland	1783
				6,000	Santa Maria	Guatemala	1902
				5,115	Kelut		
				4,000	Galunggung	Indonesia	1822
				3,600	Mount Vesuvius	Roman Empire	79
				3,500	El Chichón	Mexico	1982
				1,680	Soufrière	St. Vincent West Indies	1902
				1,000	Cotopaxi	Ecuador	1887
				700	Mount Pinatubo	Philippines	1991
				245	Nyiragongo	Congo	2002
				152	Mt Ruapehu,		
				57	Mount St. Helens	Washington	1980

Notes

A supervolcano that erupted at Lake Toba around 74,000 years ago is thought to have reduced the global human population to less than 10 thousand, which isn't much, as the global population was at most around a million at the time; see Toba catastrophe theory. This eruption is not listed because it occurred before recorded history. Also, the Thera eruption in the Aegean Sea between 1550 and 1650 B.C. may have caused a large number of deaths throughout the region, from Crete to Egypt.

References

- Volcanoworld.org
- Global Volcanism Program
- USGS

What were the deadliest tsunamis?

Death Toll

Event	Location	Date	228,000&ndash;310,000	Indian Ocean earthquake with tsunami	Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Somalia, Myanmar, and other countries	2004	100,000	1755 Lisbon earthquake, tsunami, earthquake and fire	Portugal and Morocco	1755	70,000	Messina Italy earthquake and tsunami	Italy	1908
40,000	South China Sea	China and Taiwan	1782	36,000	Krakatoa volcano explosion	Indonesia	1883	30,000	TMkaidM-NankaidM	Japan	1707	27,000	Japan	1826
				25,674	Chile	1868	22,070	Sanriku	Japan	1896	15,030	caused by Mount Unzen, Southwest Kykshk	Japan	1792
				13,486	Rykkyk			Trench	1771	5,233	TMkaidM-Kashima	Japan	1703	5,000
				5,000	NankaidM	Japan	1605	5,000	Moro					
				4,000	Borneo	Indonesia	1952	3,000	Papua New Guinea	1998	3,008	Sanriku	Japan	1933
				2,000	Great Chilean Earthquake	deaths in Chile, U.S. (Hawaii), Philippines and Japan	1960	2,000	Bristol Channel, possible tsunami	United Kingdom	1607	540	Java earthquake	2006
				165	Aleutian Island earthquake	deaths in Hawaii and Alaska, U.S.	1946	122	Good Friday Earthquake	Alaska and Hawaii, U.S.	1964	46	Southeast coast of Big Island of Hawaii	1868
				27 or 51	Placentia Bay									
				23	Nice	France	1979							

Limnic Eruptions

Death Toll Event Location

Date	1,800	Lake Nyos	Cameroon	1986	37	Lake Monoun	Cameroon	1984
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Extreme Weather

Heatwaves

Death Toll Event Location Date

35,000	European Heat Wave of 2003	Europe	2003	1,250 - 10,000	1980	United States heat wave	United States	1980
4,000	heat waves in Texas, Middle East and India		1998	739	Chicago Heat Wave of 1995			
437	Southern regions, Australia	1895-1896	Australia	1895-1896	271	heat waves in		
	Midwest and Northeast	1999						

Hail

Death Toll Event Location Date

'several hundred'	Roopkund, Uttaranchal	India	eighth century	246	Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh	India	1888
25	Henan Province	China	2002				

Smog

Death Toll Event Location Date

4,000	Great Smog of 1952	United Kingdom	1952				
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Storms

Death Toll Event Location Date

15,000	torrential rains and mudslides	Venezuela	1999	669 (and 695 missing)	heavy storms ("Winnie")		
	Philippines	2004	250+	Great Lakes Storm of 1913	Great Lakes basin region	1913	

Lightning Strikes Death Toll Event Location

Date 81 lightning struck Boeing 707 airliner near Elkton, Maryland 1963

What are the deadliest tornadoes?

Event Location Date	Death Toll
1,300 The Satura-Manikganj Sadar Tornado Manikganj, Bangladesh 1989	695
The Tri-State Tornado MO-IL-IN, USA 1925	500
317 The Great Natchez Tornado LA-MS, USA 1840	255
1896 233 The Tupelo Tornado MS, USA 1936	203
The Glazier-Higgins-Woodward Tornadoes TX-OK-KS, USA 1947	160
West Bengal-Orissa, India 1998	150
143 The Amite-Pine-Purvis Tornadoes LA-MS, USA 1908	139
118 The Dhaka Tornado Dhaka, Bangladesh 1888	117
115 The Flint Tornado MI, USA 1953	114
TX, USA 1902	94
The Worcester Tornado MA, USA 1953	54
The San Justo Tornado Buenos Aires Province, Argentina 1973	

Cyclones, Hurricanes and Typhoons

Event Location Date	Death Toll
500,000 Bhola cyclone Bangladesh 1970	300,000
India cyclone 1839	
300,000 cyclone Haiphong Vietnam 1881	229,000
China 1975	138,000
1922	60,000
1864 Calcutta cyclone India 1864	50,000
India 1942	30,000
June 1, 1965	22,000
Martinique, St. Eustatius 1780	22,000
Hurricane Mitch Central America 1998	17,000
Karachi, Pakistan 1965	10,000
India 1999	8,000
Galveston Hurricane of 1900 Texas United States	September 8, 1900
8,000 hurricane Dominican Republic 1930	8,000
Hurricane Fifi Honduras 1974	7,200
Haiti Cuba 1963	6,000
Typhoon Thelma Philippines 1991	6,000
Typhoon Vera Japan 1958	4,170
Newfoundland Hurricane U.S., Newfoundland 1775	4,075+
Lake Okeechobee Hurricane U.S. 1928	4,000
hurricane Canada 1775	3,433
Dominican Republic 1899	3,107
hurricane Cuba 1932	3,037
hurricane Atlantic Ocean 1782	3,000
hurricane Cuba 1791	3,000
2,500 cyclone Andhra Pradesh 1996	2,334
Typhoon Iris China 1959	2,150
hurricane Caribbean 1935	2,060
Hurricane David Dominican Republic, U.S. 1979	2,000-3,000
hurricane Central America 1934	2,000
hurricane Gulf of Mexico 1780	2,000
hurricane Florida 1781	2,000
hurricane Cuba, Florida 1870	2,000
Chenier Caminada Hurricane Louisiana 1893	1,836
not including the 705 missing Hurricane Katrina United States 2005	1,620
Hurricane Stan Mexico, Central America 2005	1,600
Typhoon Mary China 1960	1,500-2,500
hurricane Windward Islands 1831	1,500-2,500
hurricane Central America 1931	1,500
hurricane Greater Antilles, Mexico 1909	1,300
Typhoon Ike Philippines 1984	1,200
Hurricane Hazel Grenada, Bahamas, Haiti, U.S., Canada 1954	1,145
Hurricane Gordon Haiti, U.S. 1994	1,115
hurricane Jamaica, Cuba 1780	1,000-2,000
Sea Islands Hurricane Georgia, South Carolina 1893	1,000
Hurricane Inez Greater Antilles, Mexico 1966	1,000
cyclone India 1998	921
hurricane Greater Antilles, Mexico 1888	709
hurricane Cuba 1926	700
hurricane Georgia 1881	700
hurricane Greater Antilles 1891	600-700
hurricane U.S. 1788	682
New England Hurricane of 1938 U.S. 1938	602
Hurricane Georges Greater Antilles 1998	600
hurricane Florida, Gulf of Mexico, Texas 1919	600
Hurricane Fox (Cuba 1952	540-680
Hurricane Janet (Honduras, Mexico 1955	424
hurricane North Carolina 1857	408
Labor Day Hurricane Florida 1935	400
Last Island Hurricane (Louisiana 1856	400
Cyclone Mahina Australia 1899	400
Hurricane Hattie Belize 1961	400
hurricane Texas 1915	399-550
Hurricane Audrey Louisiana 1957	390
hurricane U.S. 1944	387
hurricane U.S. 1866	383
hurricane Windward Islands 1898	364
Hurricane Donna (every U.S. state on east coast 1960	350
hurricane Louisiana 1909	318
Hurricane Gilbert Jamaica and Mexico 1988	265-350
Great Miami Hurricane Florida, Louisiana 1926	256
Hurricane Camille U.S. 1969	228
Hurricane Allen Caribbean U.S. 1980	217
Hurricane Cleo Caribbean and Florida 1964	216
Hurricane Joan (Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador 1988	200
Hurricane Hilda Mexico 1955	200
Hurricane Diane North Carolina 1955	122
Hurricane Agnes Eastern United States 1972	120
Hurricane Ivan Caribbean, Alabama, Florida 2004	113
Hurricane Rita Florida, Mississippi, Texas 2005	96
Hurricane Diana Mexico 1990	96
Typhoon Nari Taiwan 2001	86
Hurricane Hugo Leeward Islands, Puerto Rico, South Carolina 1989	80
Hurricane Eloise Hispaniola and Eastern United States 1975	76
Hurricane Betsy Louisiana 1965	72
Typhoon Toraji Taiwan 2001	71
Cyclone Tracy Australia 1974	62
Hurricane Andrew Bahamas, Florida, Louisiana 1992	60
Hurricane Carol New England 1954	59
Hurricane Beulah Texas 1967	59
Hurricane Opal Guatemala, Mexico, Florida 1995	57
Hurricane	

Floyd Bahamas, North Carolina 1999 51 Hurricane Cesar Nicaragua, Central America, Colombia ,Venezuela  
 1996 51 Typhoon Herb Taiwan 1996 45 1939 Long Beach Tropical Storm California 1939 43  
 Hurricane Celia Texas 1970 42 Hurricane Hortense Leeward Islands 1996 41 Tropical Storm Allison  
 Texas 2001 40 Hurricane Isabel North Carolina 2003 38 Hurricane Hilda Louisiana 1964 35  
 Hurricane Charley Jamaica, Cuba, Florida 2004 34 Hurricane Fran North Carolina 1996

References

- CRED EM-DAT
- Forces of Nature: Worst Disasters
- Epic Disasters: Deadliest Hurricanes

Floods and Landslides

Location	Date	1,000,000&ndash;3,700,000	1931 Huang He flood China	1931	900,000&ndash;2,000,000	Death Toll	Event
1887 Huang He flood China	1887	500,000-900,000	1938 Huang He flood China	1938	231,000	Banqiao Dam failure. Approximately 86,000 people died from flooding and another 145,000 died during subsequent epidemics.	
China 1975.	145,000	1935 Yangtze river flood China	1935	100,000	flood	North Vietnam	1971
100,000	1911	Yangtze river flood China	1911	30,000	1954 Yangtze river flood China	1954	
25,000&ndash;?		Grote Mandrenke, storm tide	Netherlands, Germany, Denmark	1362	10,000	Great Iran Flood	
Iran 1954	2,200	Johnstown Flood	Pennsylvania	1889	2,142	North Sea flood of 1953 storm surge	
(Netherlands, United Kingdom	1953	2,000&ndash;5,000	some reports list as many as 12,000 dead			Manchhu River dam burst (Morvi, Gujarat, India	1979
1,909		Vajont Dam landslide and flood	Italy	1963	1,800		
2006 Southern Leyte mudslide	Philippines (2006	1,605&ndash;3,363	spring flooding in Haiti and Dominican Republic	2004	1,000	Mumbai (Bombay) and the surrounding state Maharashtra	India 26th July 2005
400		St. Francis Dam failure	California	1928	315	North Sea flood of 1962 storm tide	Germany 1962
270		Great Sheffield flood dam disaster	England	1864	94	Mameyes Disaster lanslide	Ponce, Puerto Rico 1985
81		Holmfirth Flood - Bilberry Reservoir dam failure	West Yorkshire, England	1852	78	Austin Dam failure	Pennsylvania 1911
70		New Orleans dike failure	Louisiana	2005	47	McDonald Dam failure	Austin, Texas 1900
16		Brisbane flood	Australia	1974			

Wildfires, Bushfires

Date	418	Hinckley Fire	Minnesota, United States	1894	250+	Thumb Fire	Michigan, United States	1881	Death Toll	Event	Location
160		Miramichi Fire, New Brunswick	Canada	1825	75	Ash Wednesday[1]	Southern Australia	1983			
71		Black Friday	Victoria, Australia	1939	62	1967 Tasmanian fires	Tasmania, Australia	1967	60	SE	
		Victoria (incl Gippsland & Dandenongs) Bushfire [2]	Victoria, Australia	1926							

References

- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- Emergency Management Australia

And what about the several hundred millions deaths caused by malaria throughout the centuries ???

Blizzards

4,000	Iran	1972	400	Great Blizzard of '88	Northeastern United States	1888	318	1993 North American Storm Complex	Northeastern United States	1993	235	Schoolhouse Blizzard	Great Plains, USA	1888	Death Toll	Event	Location	Date
144		Armistice Day Blizzard	Midwest, USA	1940	54	Blizzard of '78	Northeastern United States	1978	29									
		Blizzard of 1977	Buffalo, New York, USA	1977														

Contractible Diseases

Location	Date	300,000,000+	Smallpox	20th Century alone	300,000,000+	Bubonic Plague: Black Death	1300's-1720's;	Plague of Justinian	540-590	Third Pandemic (same disease)	1850's-1950's	20,000,000 - 100,000,000	Spanish Flu worldwide	1918 - 1919	10,000,000 - 100,000,000	deaths from diseases in Europe (millions) and the Americas (tens of millions) from diseases exchanged between continents after 1492	25,250,000	AIDS deaths worldwide	1981 - present	10,000,000	Bubonic Plague	China	1892 - 1896	5,000,000	Antonine Plague	Roman Empire	165 - 180)	4,000,000	Asian Flu pandemic	worldwide	1957	1,000,000	Hong Kong Flu pandemic	worldwide	1968	130,000	North American smallpox epidemic	1775 - 1782	60,000	Great Plague of London	London, UK	1666	775	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)	Mostly East Asia, few cases in Europe, Canada and United States	2002-2003	677	West Nile Virus outbreak	(North America	1999 - 2004	256	H5N1 strain of Bird Flu	(mainly in Asia, few in Africa and Middle East)	2003-present
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Famine		Please Note: Some of these famines may be partially or completely caused by humans.			
		Death Toll	Event	Location	Date
1,000,000&ndash;43,000,000	Period of Three Difficult Years (most estimates are between 20 and 30 million)			(China	1958 - 1961) *
24,000,000	Chinese Famine of 1907	5,000,000	Chinese Famine of 1936	China	1936
5,000,000	Holodomor USSR 1932-1934	5,000,000	Ukraine and Volga Famine	USSR	1921-1922
3,000,000	Chinese Drought 1941	3,000,000	Chinese Famine of 1928-1930	China	1928 - 1930
3,000,000	Indian Drought of 1900	1,500,000 - 3,000,000	Bengal Famine of 1943	India	1943
1,500,000	Indian Drought of 1965-1967	1,200,000	North Korean famine	North Korea	1995 - 1998
1,100,000	Irish potato famine	1,000,000	Ethopian famine	Ethopia	1846-1849
150,000	Finnish famine of 1866-1868	30,000	Dutch famine of 1944	The Netherlands	1944

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