



Catastrophic versus Chronic Geology

D. Edsall

Physics Department, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, USA

Catastrophic geology, as currently understood by the public, deals not with a literal interpretation of the Bible, but with the effects on the public well-being of natural disasters related to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, etc. The news is filled with statistics on the loss of life, infrastructure damage and short- and long-term effects on the quality of life resulting from such catastrophic events. Few places on earth are without risk from catastrophic events of a geological origin.

Recent interest in the field of medical geology has resurrected the observations and views of the Greeks and focused attention of geologists and public health officials on the relationships between geological materials and processes and the chronic health problems of animals and humans. It is wrong to believe that chronic health problems related to geological materials and processes are restricted only to the under-developed countries of the world. On the contrary, there should be even more concern in developed countries because of the introduction of anthropogenic sources of hazardous materials into the natural environment.

How do countries of the European Union compare with other regions of the world in the effects of catastrophic events versus the chronic influence of geological materials and processes on public health and safety?