



# At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters

By Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon, Ian Davis

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The term 'natural disaster' is often used to refer to natural events such as earthquakes, hurricanes or floods. However, the phrase 'natural disaster' suggests an uncritical acceptance of a deeply engrained ideological and cultural myth. *At Risk* questions this myth and argues that extreme natural events are not disasters until a vulnerable group of people is exposed.

The updated new edition confronts a further ten years of ever more expensive and deadly disasters and discusses disaster not as an aberration, but as a signal failure of mainstream 'development'. Two analytical models are provided as tools for understanding vulnerability. One links remote and distant 'root causes' to 'unsafe conditions' in a 'progression of vulnerability'. The other uses the concepts of 'access' and 'livelihood' to understand why some households are more vulnerable than others.

Examining key natural events and incorporating strategies to create a safer world, this revised edition is an important resource for those involved in the fields of environment and development studies.

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- Sales Rank: #697315 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2003-12-21
- Released on: 2003-11-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x 1.12" w x 6.14" l, 1.50 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 496 pages

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#### Review

"An excellent overview of the different human responses to natural hazards, dispelling the belief that little can be done to avoid the tragedies associated with natural hazards."

-Gareth Jones, University of Strathclyde

"Paradoxically in today's world safety coexists with risk. Chronic threats, novel risks, and dangerous trends ranging from new viruses to global warming crowd in on us. "At Risk offers a rational analysis of the disasters and hazards that concern us."

-Allen Perry, University of Wales Swansea

""At Risk has become a classic of disasters literature. Its key argument, that the analysis of disasters should not be segregated from everyday life, is an important lesson for students, researchers, and practitioners."

-Maureen Fordham, University of Northumbria

#### About the Author

Ben Wisner is Research Fellow at the Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics, and Affiliate Researcher on the Environmental Studies Program at Oberlin College, Ohio.

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Ian Davis is Managing Director of the Oxford Centre for Disaster Studies.

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