

STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Are You Ready to be Surprised?

Greetings,

September is here. Took my hummingbird feeders down this weekend, cuz they're on their way to Mexico or wherever they spend the winter. No goodbyes, no warning; just buzzing around like crazy last week and then gone.

Just like last year....and the year before....and..... ..hmmmm, there seems to be a pattern, here. And every year I'm caught by surprise.

It's not that hummingbirds are smarter; the change in temperatures and daylight and weather are all pretty good signs of something happening. They're simply ready to go, they're prepared.



(Southbound?)

September is here and it is **National Preparedness Month**. This is the time that smart people (and hummingbirds) remind folk like me and you to take a look at their readiness for the coming change, and also the unexpected.

I'm not doing that. I'm not asking you to make sure you have water, food, first aid & medicines, money, and provisions to ensure survival in a disaster.

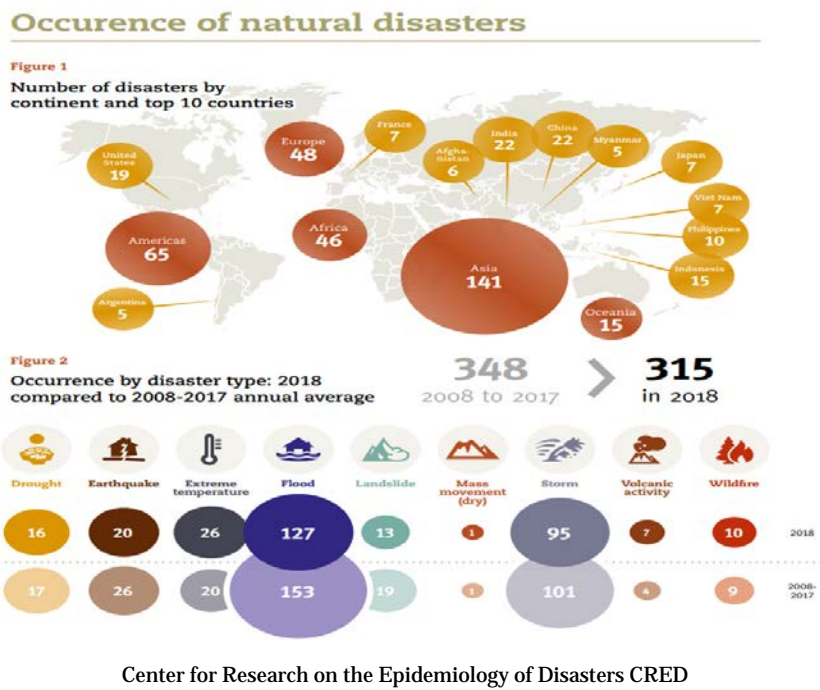


No, I'm the jerk who says you shouldn't have to be told. You should be prepared already. Preparedness ought to be part of the routine.

The one thing you can always depend on is that you don't know what disaster is lurking around, waiting for you to drop your guard.

In 2018, there were 315 natural disaster events recorded with 11,804 deaths, over 68 million people affected, and \$131.7 billion in economic losses across the world.

Globally, Indonesia recorded nearly half the total deaths (47%), while India recorded the highest number of people affected (35%). Earthquakes were the deadliest type of disaster accounting for 45% of deaths, followed by flooding at 24%. Flooding affected the highest number of people, accounting for 50% of the total affected, followed by storms which accounted for 28%.



3.9 billion people, about half the world's population, were exposed to natural disasters in 2018.

The need for preparedness is not an argument I need to make to laboratories. **Mostly.** We plan for a bunch of unknowns. Back-up instrumentation, redundancy in critical systems, supplies and power are all examples of preparedness we practice all the time.

It's those things we never expect to expect that I caution about, today. Natural disaster, catastrophic accidents and, unfortunately, the unpredictable actions of man challenge our definitions of preparedness. Is realizing that we will be caught off-guard one step closer to being ready?



And, of course, my responsibility is to remind you that infectious disease and emergent pathogens are disasters waiting to occur. In the lab, our obligation to staff safety requires a nod to preparedness in biosafety.

September is here. Flu will be ramping up, are you ready? Are new employees trained on techniques and instruments where risk is elevated? Are biosafety cabinets understood, uncluttered, and certified? Are any staff fit tested for N-95 masks and proficient in enhanced PPE? Our healthcare worker safety is a mandate for preparedness.

Oh, yeah, you should check your tires for snow travel, put away the patio furniture and shut off water to outdoor faucets.

Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan

