



International Strategy for **Disaster Reduction**

Terminology: Basic terms of disaster risk reduction

The ISDR Secretariat presents these basic definitions on disaster risk reduction in order to promote a common understanding on this subject, for use by the public, authorities and practitioners. The terms are based on a broad consideration of different international sources. This is a continuing effort to be reflected in future reviews, responding to a need expressed in several international venues, regional discussions and national commentary. Feedback from specialists and other practitioners to improve these definitions will be most welcome.

Acceptable risk	<p>The level of loss a society or community considers acceptable given existing social, economic, political, cultural, technical and environmental conditions.</p> <p><i>In engineering terms, acceptable risk is also used to assess structural and non-structural measures undertaken to reduce possible damage at a level which does not harm people and property, according to codes or "accepted practice" based, among other issues, on a known probability of hazard.</i></p>
Biological hazard	<p>Processes of organic origin or those conveyed by biological vectors, including exposure to pathogenic micro-organisms, toxins and bioactive substances, which may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation.</p> <p><i>Examples of biological hazards: outbreaks of epidemic diseases, plant or animal contagion, insect plagues and extensive infestations.</i></p>
Building codes	<p>Ordinances and regulations controlling the design, construction, materials, alteration and occupancy of any structure to insure human safety and welfare. Building codes include both technical and functional standards.</p>
Capacity	<p>A combination of all the strengths and resources available within a community, society or organization that can reduce the level of risk, or the effects of a disaster.</p> <p><i>Capacity may include physical, institutional, social or economic means as well as skilled personal or collective attributes such as leadership and management. Capacity may also be described as capability.</i></p>
Capacity building	<p>Efforts aimed to develop human skills or societal infrastructures within a community or organization needed to reduce the level of risk.</p> <p><i>In extended understanding, capacity building also includes development of institutional, financial, political and other resources, such as technology at different levels and sectors of the society.</i></p>
Climate change	<p>The climate of a place or region is changed if over an extended period (typically decades or longer) there is a statistically significant change in measurements of either the mean state or variability of the climate for that place or region.</p> <p><i>Changes in climate may be due to natural processes or to persistent anthropogenic changes in atmosphere or in land use. Note that the definition of climate change used in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is more</i></p>

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