

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Global Urban History

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## URBAN DISASTERS

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## Urban Disasters

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**Abstract:** This Element explores the history of urban disasters around the globe over the past 300 years. It introduces the reader to central concepts that help define the study of disasters, then moves on to explore the relationship between cities and disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, and epidemics. It asks, for example: How have cities responded in times of crisis, and what practices, infrastructures, and/or institutions have they introduced to prevent disasters from reoccurring? Who suffers most when urban disasters strike, and why? In what ways do catastrophes change cities? How, if at all, are cities unique from the countryside? To answer these questions and more, this concise history looks at a series of case studies from the eighteenth century through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Element concludes with a brief look at the ongoing effects of climate change and the future of cities.

**Keywords:** cities, urban history, disasters, environment, public health

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