

Catastrophes such as earthquakes and floods kill thousands of people and destroy millions of dollars of personal property, buildings and other structures annually. Unfortunately, this amount of property damage is escalating each year.

The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction

The havoc wreaked by hurricane Andrew was so extreme and so catastrophic that it prompted Canadian researchers and insurance companies to form an institute to work together to reduce losses from disasters. Canadian insurance companies believed that more Canadian research into natural catastrophes was needed.

By establishing a branch at The University of Western Ontario, the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) has engaged a large pool of faculty with relevant expertise. The ICLR is a unique research consortium involving co-ordinated efforts by Western, member insurance companies and other partners, all aiming to reduce natural disaster destruction. By examining the politics, science and economics behind natural hazards, the ICLR hopes to prevent them from becoming catastrophes. The ICLR achieves this by bringing investigators from many disciplines together to collaborate on ideas and projects for enhancing disaster safety and reducing losses.

In trying to minimize deaths, injuries and property damage from disasters, the institute works to develop prevention programs, increase public awareness of their findings and provide advice about preventing disaster losses. The ICLR is not just a Canadian effort, but seeks to conduct its research efforts on an international scope. This mandate has been prompted by disasters such as the Asian tsunami, which, like many disasters, cause far more injuries and deaths in developing nations.

ICLR Research

The ICLR is internationally recognized for its disaster prevention research and is the first Canadian group that brings engineers, geologists, economists and political scientists together to investigate the dangers of natural disasters. By identifying ways to manage and mitigate disasters, members of the ICLR hope to lessen the impact these events have on our society, economy and culture. In addition to building an inter-disciplinary research network in disaster research, the ICLR also focuses on the social and health impacts of disasters. The ICLR has established four research priorities:

- Reducing wind and earthquake damage to housing and infrastructure
- Understanding disaster risk management and prevention
- Enhancing government science related to natural disasters
- Improving community actions for disaster mitigation

The ICLR is also working with various government organizations on the following projects:

- Drafting a Health Canada report on natural hazards and human health
- Working with Emergency Preparedness Canada on various issues
- Working with Infrastructure Canada to create a role for the ICLR in rebuilding Canada's infrastructure to ensure higher levels of safety and preparedness

In the next five years, the ICLR will focus on three main areas—housing, resilient communities, and risks and infrastructure—which will involve engineers, decision-makers, public policy creators and all levels of government. Some of its further research interests include:

- Developing a decision support tool for disaster risk management
- The role of government in services for natural disaster reduction
- Enhancing municipal disaster prevention by enabling neighbourhood and household level emergency management



The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction—working to reduce the impact of natural disasters