

Carl's Catastrophic Calamity Chart

I know the media has created some confusion in the past during crisis situations. An overuse of certain adjectives has resulted in uncertainty. How bad is cataclysmic? Is devastating better or worse than disastrous?

As a public service I decided to go ahead and make the be-all, end-all of calamity charts so that the media and viewers can get on the same page. Finally we'll all know what everyone is talking about. Patent-pending.

LEVEL 1: Biblical Proportions

Biblical Proportions tops our list. Hopefully this isn't invoked that often, if ever. Generally any on-air talent that has invoked "Biblical Proportions" has wet his or herself at least once and is visibly shaking and sweating. It should be noted that "Biblical Proportions" should be used in concert with the type of disaster that is occurring, i.e. "A Hurricane of Biblical Proportions." For added effect the on-air talent is encouraged to throw in gratuitous references to the Biblical Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah or any of the Egyptian plagues, particularly the one with the frogs. (I mean, frogs? That's just creepy.)

A large part of the screen will be devoted to a countdown to the event so that people know exactly how much time they have left to live and can update their day timers accordingly.

LEVEL 2: Apocalyptic

Slightly below Biblical Proportions is Apocalyptic. Apocalyptic should only be used when certain destruction is all but inevitable and specific events are occurring. These are: Run on all gas stations, Home Depots, Lowe's and Entenmann's Chocolate Chip Cookies (they stay fresh for days!)

Everyone near the site of disaster simultaneously leaves town, all headed in the same direction - usually along the path that the storm/disaster will take.

Certain on-air personalities show up and travel to the site of the predicted disaster. These include, at a minimum, Anderson Cooper.

Any on-air talent discussing an Apocalyptic event should mention that gas will not be available to anyone except those getting it through an underground black market at \$419 a gallon. They should also repeatedly mention their loved ones on-air and say goodbye to them. In between live shots the network should show clips from any of the "Mad Max" movies with Mel Gibson.

On-air talent is still expected to stand in the middle of the event for the entire duration, but

body armor and kevlar are allowed.

Wetting oneself is completely optional, but encouraged.

LEVEL 3: Cataclysmic/Catastrophic

Often confused with Apocalyptic is Cataclysmic/Catastrophic. This is not nearly as bad as Apocalyptic. For example, on-air talent should note that plant and animal life are likely to return in a few years, and that rebuilding any area hit by the Cataclysmic/Catastrophic event will take many years and untold Billions (with a B) but is in the best interest of every single taxpayer.

The Cataclysmic/Catastrophic event usually is not bad enough to discourage looters, although they are a lot more careful about where they go and what they take.

LEVEL 4: Devastating

Devastating is the last term in the list that is used before the actual event occurs. In other words, all media-covered Calamities are, by definition Devastating or worse before hand. After the event has occurred, and only after, are LEVELS 5-14 available for use.

Devastating events usually don't result in everyone evacuating the area. In fact, as soon as locals hear that the event will merely be devastating, they actually feel encouraged to stay behind. This particularly applies to those living in trailers, or near the ocean, or below sea level, or those living in trailers below sea level right on the beach. Or in a house boat. On-air talent should actively seek these people out before the Devastating event, and ask them all of the necessary questions:

"Who are you?"

"Why are you staying behind?"

"You know you're a dead man right?"

The optional question is: What is your plan if things get too bad? (It is, after all, predicted to be Devastating.) Some of the most interesting answers usually come from asking this question. (i.e. "Well, ya know, I don't durn know.")

LEVELS 5-14:

Levels 5-14 are generally reserved for after the event. None of these rises to the fear-inducing descriptive power quite like levels 1-4. (Although, I'm sure disastrous sounds bad at first read.)

Level 5: Disastrous - Roof has caved in at the local Entenmann's plant. Losses in the millions (of cookies.) Discussion of how this will affect the price of cookies across the

country creates a buying panic, and everyone buys up Entenmann's, and a few Oreos too (mostly Double Stuff). Milk also sees an appreciable bump. (Whole, 2% and 1%; who can stand that skim stuff it's like white water.) Cookie prices widely predicted to hit \$12 a pound.

Level 6: Terrible - Multiple trees are down, and at least one tree has fallen on an old dodge pickup. It's red although the paint is peeling in many places. On the back is a sticker of Calvin peeing on something - it's hard to tell what through all of the branches. A close-up reveals a bumper sticker: "The only good tree is a gun rack." Discussion of "irony" ensues.

Level 7: Grave - An entire tree down. Close-ups show it was rotted through and through with some sort of tree disease, and it fell down in the middle of an abandoned park. There may even be grubs or something. Some windows are broken from blowing mailboxes and garbage cans. Water is everywhere - I mean, everything is Very Wet.

Level 8: Harsh - Wind gusts have displaced most residents garbage cans. Multiple mailboxes are lost. Many ironic shots of road signs in usual positions. At least one dangling wire from a telephone pole or a dangling power line. Sparks are optional.

Level 9: Rotten - Several occurrences of a large branch half broken off of a very old looking tree. It's entirely possible the tree may have to be cut down, even though it's Very Old and looks very nice. Look, it has initials carved on it from 1814! Should the tree be saved? Perhaps. Perhaps it should.

Level 10: Poor - Several Really Nice Trees have been defoliated, everything is wet, some mailboxes were lost. A car is parked by the roadside, obviously abandoned. It's an Audi. It's sorta wet.

Level 11: Pretty Bad - Drainage ditches filled with water, often flowing somewhere. It may be muddy too. What's in that muddy water? It's really hard to tell.

Level 12: So-So - Roads are wet and large puddles have formed. Cars driving by splash roadside reporters. Dedicated on-air talent will seek a busy road with large puddles near the curbs.

Level 13: Not Bad - Wet roads, some storm drains clogged up. Some cars actually have leaves STICKING to them. Because they're wet. (The leaves that is.)

Level 14: Actually Pretty Good - Roads are almost wet. In some places, where people aren't driving.

Any questions about this chart can be sent to calamity@carlschaad.com. Please do so before the apocalyptic hurricane season gets underway.