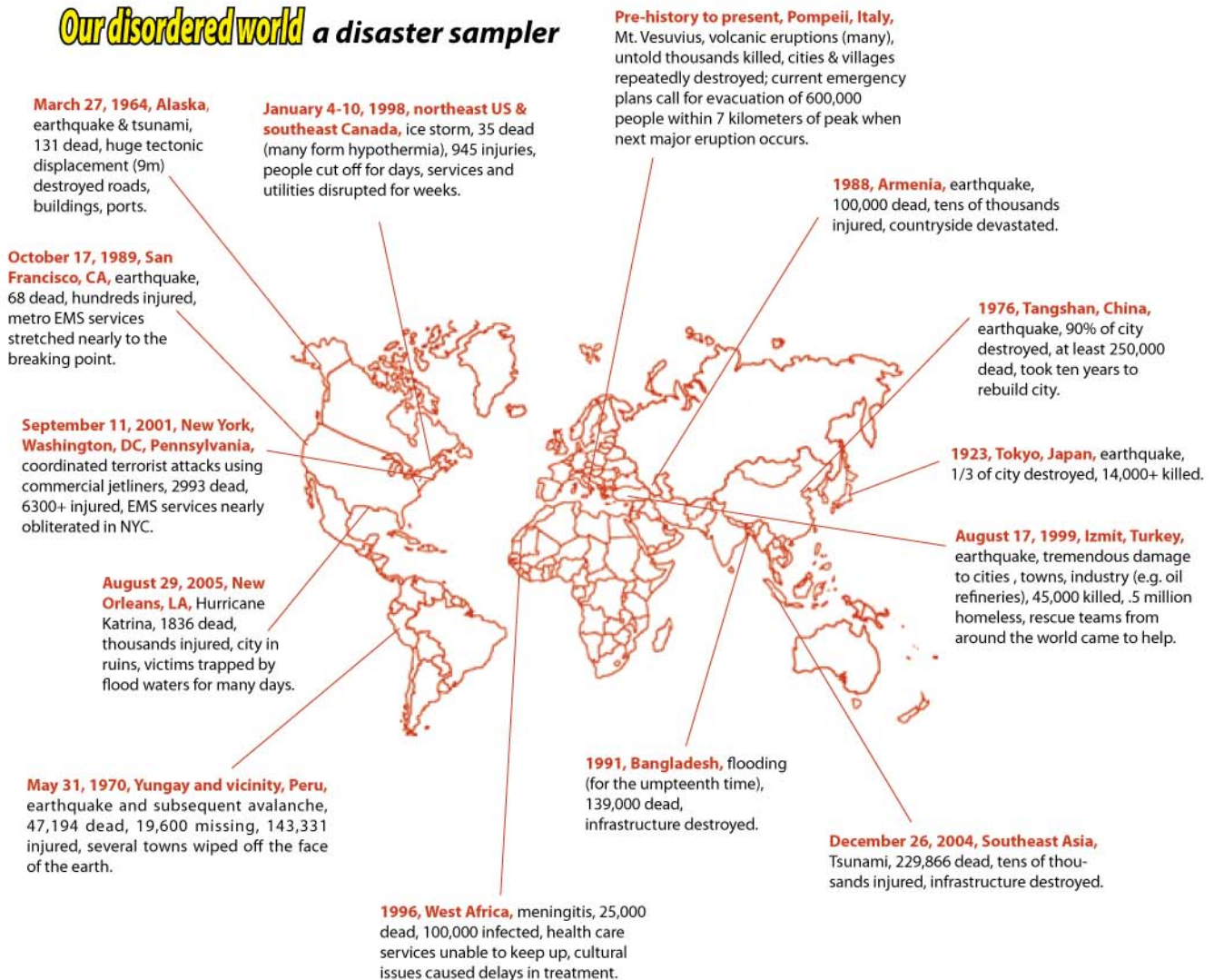


It's easy to trust in fire trucks,

ambulances, rescue squads, radios, cell phones, and hospitals. Electricity, running water, food, lights to see by at night, shelter from the rain—we can hardly imagine life without them. We have emergency plans, Incident Command Systems, Mass Casualty Event strategies, blood banks, weather satellites, early warning systems, the National Guard, and evacuation routes. When the *big bad thing* happens, we simply run over, break the glass, pull the lever, and help comes with lights flashing and sirens blaring. Hurt people will be in the hospital within the hour; food, water, and blankets will be distributed without delay; the fire will be put out; and power will surge right back on to keep the steaks frozen and the DVD player spinning. Our world is civilized and ordered, right?

Maybe not.

Our disordered world a disaster sampler



Natural disasters

have increased four-fold in the last two decades, from 120 to nearly 500 per year, (at least one major disaster each day) according to an Oxfam report released late last year. Most of these are storms and floods, and they hit the poorest nations of our planet the hardest—more than 250 million people in South Asia, Africa, and Mexico were affected just in 2007. While there are ongoing debates as to why this is happening (global climate change is considered a likely culprit), no one argues about the end result: more and more people are at risk for being caught in a disastrous situation where EMS response will be overwhelmed or delayed, and basic human needs (food, clothing, water, shelter) will be lacking.