



Preliminary estimates from Swiss Re *sigma* show that natural catastrophes and man-made disasters caused USD 52 billion in losses to society in 2009, of which USD 24 billion were insured

**Contact:**

Dr Brian Rogers, Zurich  
Telephone +41 43 285 2733

Dr Thomas Holzheu, New York  
Telephone +1 212 317 5190

Clarence Wong, Hong Kong  
Telephone +852 2582 5644

**Media Relations, Zurich**  
**Telephone +41 43 285 7171**  
Swiss Reinsurance Company  
Mythenquai 50/60  
P.O. Box  
CH-8022 Zurich

Telephone +41 43 285 2121  
Fax +41 43 285 2999  
[www.swissre.com](http://www.swissre.com)

**Zurich, 30 November 2009 – According to initial estimates from Swiss Re’s forthcoming *sigma* study, the total cost to society of natural catastrophes and man-made disasters in 2009 was USD 52 billion versus USD 267bn in 2008. The cost to insurers in 2009 was USD 24 billion. Insured losses were below average due to a calm US hurricane season.**

In 2009, natural catastrophes will cost insurers roughly USD 21 billion, with man-made disasters triggering additional claims of approximately USD 3 billion. By way of comparison, total insured losses had soared to over USD 50 billion worldwide in 2008. The lower figure for 2009 resulted from the calm US hurricane season. Contrary to the US, Europe suffered above average insured losses.

**Above average losses during the first half of 2009**

Claims from natural catastrophes and man-made disasters during the first seven months of 2009 were nearly double the average over the last 20 years. Between January and July, five events each triggered insured losses in excess of USD 1 billion. The costliest event was winter storm Klaus, which struck France and Spain in January, and led to insured losses of USD 3.5 billion. A July hailstorm that hit Switzerland and Austria cost insurers another USD 1.25 billion. In the US, a winter storm and two tornadoes generated total insured losses of roughly USD 3.5 billion.

Worldwide, approximately 12 000 people were killed by catastrophes in 2009, compared to 240 000 in 2008. The death toll in 2009 was among the lowest of the last 20 years. The region most affected was Asia, where a September earthquake in Indonesia claimed more than 1 000 lives. Another 2 000 people died when three typhoons struck the region between August and October.

Thomas Hess, Chief Economist of Swiss Re, commented: "In 2009, we [thankfully] saw no such event like Hurricane Katrina, which caused USD 71 billion in losses back in 2005. We were lucky, but that may not be the case next year. Though losses from natural catastrophes and man-made disasters have continuously trended upwards in the past twenty years, we still see high volatility from year to year."

**Swiss Re to present its outlook on the (re)insurance industry including a focus on natural catastrophe insurance at its Economic Forum in London of 1 December 2009**

Swiss Re's Chief Economists Thomas Hess and Clarence Wong will present the outlook for (re)insurance tomorrow at Swiss Re's Economic Forum in London. At the same event, Matthias Weber, member of Swiss Re's Executive Board and Head of Property & Specialty, will provide more details on the natural catastrophe topic and will give a presentation with the title: "Natural Catastrophe Insurance – Aspects of a Growing Business". Please find more information on the London event in the notes to editors.

**Tables:**

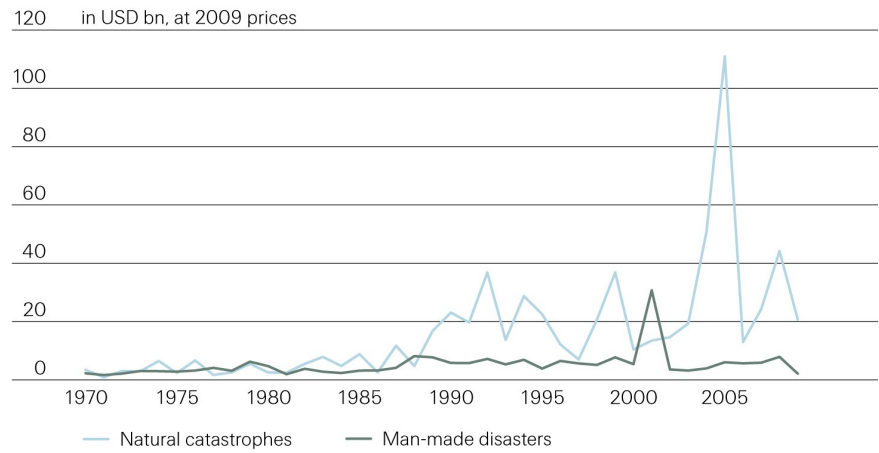
**Table 1: The most costly insured losses in 2009**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Insured losses (in US m)</i>	<i>Date (start)</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Country</i>
1	3 540	24.01.2009	Winter storm Klaus, winds up to 170 km/h, heavy rain	France, Spain
2	1 350	10.02.2009	Winter storm, winds up to 145 km/h, heavy rain	US
3	1 250	23.07.2009	Hail, thunderstorms; damage to buildings and some crops	Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Czech Rep.
4	1 130	09.04.2009	Tornadoes, storms with winds up to 105 km/h, hail	US
5	1 050	10.06.2009	Thunderstorms with winds up to 128km/h, hail	US

**Table 2: Catastrophes with the most fatalities in 2009**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Victims (dead and missing)</i>	<i>Date (start)</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Country</i>
1	1 117	30.09.2009	Earthquake (M <sub>w</sub> 7.6); aftershocks	Indonesia
2	854	26.09.2009	Typhoon Ketsana/No 16, winds up to 160 km/h, heavy rain	Philippines, Viet Nam, Cambodia et al
3	732	07.08. 2009	Typhoon Morakot/No 8, winds up to 148 km/h, floods	Taiwan, Philippines, China
4	512	03.10.2009	Typhoon Parma/No 17, winds up to 195 km/h, heavy rain	Philippines
5	311	11.01.2009	Ferry Teratai Prima sinks	South China Sea, Indonesia

**Figure 1: Insured losses 1970-2009**



\* 2009: provisional figures  
 Source: Swiss Re, *sigma* preliminary estimates of catastrophe losses in 2009

**Table 3: Definitions and selection criteria for sigma catastrophe statistics**

<b>Definitions and selection criteria for <i>sigma</i> catastrophe statistics:</b>	
Natural catastrophes	Loss events triggered by natural forces
Man-made disasters	Loss events associated with human activities
Total losses	Losses with a direct economic impact
Insured property claims	Part of total loss covered by property insurance
<b>Minimum selection criteria:</b>	
Total losses	USD 85.1m
Or: Insured property claims	Maritime disasters: USD 17.1m Aviation: USD 34.2m Other losses: USD 42.5m
Or: Casualties	Dead or missing: 20 Injured: 50 Homeless: 2 000

---

## Notes for editors

### Swiss Reinsurance Company Ltd

Swiss Re is a leading and highly diversified global reinsurer. The company operates through offices in more than 20 countries. Founded in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1863, Swiss Re offers financial services products that enable risk-taking essential to enterprise and progress. The company's traditional reinsurance products and related services for property and casualty, as well as the life and health business are complemented by insurance-based corporate finance solutions and supplementary services for comprehensive risk management. Swiss Re is rated "A+" by Standard & Poor's, "A1" by Moody's and "A" by A.M. Best.

The comprehensive *sigma* study "Natural and man-made catastrophes in 2009" will be published in spring 2010. Electronic copies and printed copies will be available at that time. If you wish to pre-order a printed copy, please call or send your full postal address to:

e-mail:	sigma@swissre.com	
Zurich:	Telephone + 41 43 285 3889	Fax +41 43 282 3889
New York:	Telephone +1 212 317 5400	Fax +1 212 317 5455
Hong Kong:	Telephone +852 25 82 5703	Fax +852 25 11 6603

How to obtain a copy of this *sigma* media release:

The English, German and French versions of this *sigma* media release are available electronically on Swiss Re's website:

[www.swissre.com](http://www.swissre.com)

This media release is also distributed by e-mail. To receive your copy, please contact [sigma@swissre.com](mailto:sigma@swissre.com)

Swiss Re's Economic Forum 2009: please find the details of the event at [www.swissre.com/](http://www.swissre.com/)