LANDSLIDES AND MUDFLOWS

A landslide is a rapid shift in land mass that is typically associated with periods of heavy rainfall or rapid snowmelt. Landslides tend to worsen the effects of flooding that often accompanies them. In areas that have been burned by forest and brush fires, a lower threshold of precipitation may initiate landslides.

While some landslides move slowly and cause damage gradually, others move so rapidly that they can destroy property and take lives suddenly and unexpectedly.

Areas that are generally prone to landslide hazards include:

- Existing old landslides.
- The bases of steep slopes.
- The bases of drainage channels.
- Developed hillsides where leach-field septic systems are used.

Debris flows—sometimes referred to as mudslides, mudflows, lahars, or debris avalanches—are common types of fast-moving landslides. Flows usually start on steep hillsides as shallow landslides that accelerate to speeds that are typically about 10 miles per hour, but can exceed 35 miles per hour.

The consistency of debris flows range from watery mud to thick, rocky mud that can carry away items such as boulders, trees, and cars. When the flows reach flatter ground, the debris spreads over a broad area.

The most destructive types of debris flows are those that accompany volcanic eruptions.

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