The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:
These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.WE.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Preparing can help cites be more resilient. (Photo credit: Getty Images, Robert Barnes)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- According to NASA, while climate change may reduce the total number of storms that happen around the world, it may increase the number of very intense and damaging storms. Warmer global temperatures put more water vapour into the air, affecting the formation of storms—greater humidity can lead to more powerful storms. (NASA Earth Observatory)
- Weather-related disasters have increased by 14 per cent around the world over the past 20 years. (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario)
- In the summer of 2013, Toronto experienced rainfall so heavy the sewer systems were not able to handle the water, and heavy flooding occurred across the city, causing nearly one billion dollars in damage. (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario)
- Canada is increasingly urban. One third of Canadians—12.5 million people—live in our three largest cities: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. The number of urban metropolitan areas with more than 100,000 people living in them increased from 33 in the 2011 census to 35 in the 2016 census. (Statistics Canada)
- More than half of the world’s entire population lives in cities. By 2050, the UN predicts that as much as 66 per cent of humanity will live in urban environments. (United Nations)
- Large cities can become what scientists call “heat islands.” Human activity and building in large urban areas generate a lot of heat, making them hotter than the surrounding rural areas. This affects the air currents and weather around cities, and can lead to more severe storms. (National Geographic)

KEY TERMS

Resilience—The capacity to recover from setbacks or hardships.

Simulation—An exercise to practice and prepare by acting out situations.

Climate change—Weather patterns around the world are changing because of increasing levels of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, caused by human activity.
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- Themes: Environment, Natural Disasters, Local Issue
- Course Connections: Science, Canadian and World Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability
- Bristol board
- Video recording device

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Identify consequences of emergencies and natural events and how they affect local and national communities
- Analyze how local and national communities prepare and respond to emergencies and natural events
- Become an active member in, and develop a sense of connectedness to, their local and national community

DISCUSS

1. What natural events are most likely to occur in your local region? What natural events are most likely to occur in other parts of Canada?
2. How have natural events affected Canadian communities? What are the potential risks of natural events in the future?
3. What have you and your family already done to prepare for an emergency or natural event? What has your school done? What has your community done?
4. What are the benefits of being prepared in case of an emergency or a natural event?

DIVE DEEPER

Tell students they will explore natural events and the effects those events can have on their local and national communities. Show students “‘Lucky to get out’: Fort McMurray fire evacuees get first view of burned city” www.thechronicleherald.ca/canada/1362614-video-lucky-to-get-out-fort-mcmurray-fire-evacuees-get-first-view-of-burned-city (1:05) and ask them to think about what impact the wildfires in Alberta had on the members of the Fort McMurray community.

Organize students into groups of three or four and give each group a slip of paper with a potential local or national emergency or a natural event on it. The “Get Prepared” website from the Government of Canada www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/hzd/index-en.aspx provides information for local and national emergencies and natural events. Ask students to brainstorm what they already know about this type of event and what the potential impacts could be on their local or national community. Ask one student from each group to share their ideas with the class. As a class, read the Global Voices article and discuss the questions from the Discussion section.

On the front board, write the question “How do we create resilient communities?” As a class, discuss the strategies and initiatives that communities, both locally and nationally, are already using to prepare for and recover from emergencies and natural events. Record students’ ideas on the board. Which members of the community are most vulnerable? Does everyone have access to support if necessary? How can community members become more informed and more prepared? How does fear play a role in people’s ability to be prepared?

In the same groups as before, ask students to identify which strategies would most benefit people if the emergency or natural event they discussed previously occurred. Each group will then prepare a media text (e.g. poster, video, blog post, pamphlet) designed to inform people about the risks of the emergency or natural event and how to prepare for it. Give students the option to present these resources within the school or the local community.

EXTENSION

Consider participating in “Emergency Preparedness Week” (May 7-13) coordinated by Public Safety Canada. Students could form an action group and prepare and present activities and resources to encourage school staff, students and families to learn more about how awareness and preparation can help to build more resilient communities.

RESOURCES