

Composite of Brown County

Landslides are a serious geologic hazard in almost every state in America. While not all landslides result in private property damage, many landslides impact transportation corridors and fuel conduits. They can also pose a threat to human life.

Landslides can be broken down into two categories: rapidly moving and slow moving. Rapidly moving landslides present the greatest threat to human life because people living in or traveling through areas prone to rapidly moving landslides are at increased risk of serious injury. Slow moving landslides can cause significant property damage, but are less likely to result in serious human injuries.

Landslide Characteristics

Landslides are downhill movements of rock, debris or soil mass. The size of a landslide generally depends on the geology and the initial cause of the landslide. Landslides vary greatly in their volume of rock and soil, length, width and depth of the area affected, frequency of occurrence and speed of movement. Some characteristics that determine the type of landslide are slope of the hillside, moisture content and the nature of the underlying materials.

Landslides are typically triggered by periods of heavy rainfall or rapid snowmelt. Earthquakes and excavations may also trigger landslides. Human activities, including locating development near steep slopes, can increase susceptibility to landslide events. Landslides on steep slopes are more dangerous because movements can be rapid.

Although landslides are a natural geologic process, the incidence of landslides and their impacts on people can be exacerbated by human activities. Grading for road construction and development can increase slope steepness. Grading and construction can decrease the stability of a hillside by adding weight to the top of the slope, removing support at the base of the slope and increasing water content.

History

Brown County has a history of landslides and subsidence during periods of heavy, intense rainfall. Landslides result in road blockages making it difficult for emergency response vehicles to access certain areas.

Vulnerability and Risk

Brown County properties and residents in at-risk areas are small. However, the impacts of landslides should be taken into consideration as new development and construction occurs.