Delia Kirk

Natural Disasters

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Disasters in the movie report.

2012

The movie I chose was 2012 with John Cusack, Directed by Roland Emmerich. I chose the movie because I had never seen the movie before, and the trailer looked interesting, and the kids wanted to see it too.

The movie starts in what “they say was a copper mine 1100 ft down that they use as a tool to monitor the earth's core. They were concerned about recent solar flares and the possible radiation effects.They start to panic as they should, after the high temperatures from the earth’s core — the perfect combination for a natural disaster. The location where the events start is in California when small earthquakes start to happen.

Then you notice that the earthquake was the result of convergent plates. The progression order of the disaster seems scientifically correct. But the details about the disaster were a bit exaggerated, starting from the earthquake. It seemed accurate from the type of destruction, but the ground collapsing into nowhere seemed far fetched. John Cusack’s character, Jackson, was able to outrun the earthquake in California in a limo, driving through buildings and nearly off of a cliff, all the while a 10.9 earthquake is happening all around them. The city is literally crumbling, yet they are able to make it to the airport. I doubt that with an earthquake of that magnitude, there would be any chance of them being able to stand up straight, let alone drive through the city.

Never the less they make it to the plane and just barely take off before the runway cracks and crumbles beneath the plane tires. As they are flying over the city, gigantic chunks of the city are breaking off and falling into what appears to be nothing and sliding into the ocean. Of course, we have never seen an earthquake this size in a major city, so we wouldn’t know exactly how it would look or how fast it would happen, but this scene seems to vary exaggerated for dramatic effect. Though really exciting and fun to watch a scene like this, I'm doubtful that is how it would happen.

Next the family makes their way to Yellowstone, where there is a “crazy man” played by Woody Harrelson who has known all along that the supervolcano was going to erupt, he's screaming on top of a mountain when they find him just before the eruption, there is an initial explosion that looks like a mushroom cloud sending ash and lava into the air, the intensity from the blast hits the man a few seconds later sending him, and all the surrounding trees flying back, this seems accurate although the man gets up in time to see the giant pieces of earth falling from the sky. If he were close enough to get thrown back, then the heat of the blast and the ash would have killed him instantly. Again, Jackson is outrunning the ash cloud and lava in an old r.v. weaving in and out of falling, firey chunks of earth, the r.v. is hit by one, but only the back half is damaged, and he manages to make it back to the plane just in time to escape the enormous ash cloud — the plane flyes through the ash and out into the blue sky.

If the ash were to get into the plane at all, it would clog the instruments, and they would inevitably crash through a series of other seemingly impossible events, including a plane crash. They make it to the “Ark” where they are met with a tsunami, the tidal wave hits them and brings with it Air Force One taking out their support and leaving them floating in the new sea that has just been created, they are now heading right into the side of Mt. Everest, they are unable to start the engine because the gate to the ship is still open. They finally get the doors closed and are able to avoid the collision. This to me seems too unlikely, firstly I don’t believe the water would rise to the levels it would need to bring the ship to the heights of Mt. Everest, and if it did the water would not just be calm and still seconds after it came in like a tsunami.

Overall I was able to see the science behind the movie and where the creator really just had fun with the exaggeration of his evident love for the geography who seemed to have a sense of humor. Now understanding the terminology and concepts of natural disasters does make watching movies like this one more amusing. It was fun to use this movie as an opportunity to teach my kids new stuff I learned. I could see the possibility of this type of exaggeration become annoying to professionals who really work in science. I do look forward to the next movie to compare and contrast with the family. I do feel the movie touched on the basics of the disasters with a twist of sense of humor.