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DISASTER CENTRAL

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With all the apocalyptic-like events lately, you might think Doomsday's looming

What on Earth is going on? Are those Doomsday wackos right?

Tsunami pounds Japan. Quake pummels New Zealand. Floods drown Australia. Haiti in ruins. Chile, China rocked. Pakistan under water. An Icelandic volcano halts air travel. Catastrophes kill nearly 300,000 people in 2010.

The 8.8 Chile quake shifts the earth's axis three inches. Perhaps you noticed, a day is now 1.26 millionths of a second shorter.

From Arkansas to Italy, over a few days in January, thousands of birds fall dead from the sky. They call it Aflockalypse. Millions of fish go belly up.

Let's not even mention Moammar Gadhafi and Charlie Sheen. What a mess 2011 is shaping up to be.

But the images from Japan are especially gobsmacking, like something out of *Battle: Los Angeles*, the new alien invasion flick. But more unsettling, more apocalyptic, more real.

Ungodly sights

Those tidal waves full of cars and houses. The floating infernos. The vanished trains and boats. Smoke billowing from a nuclear plant. Ungodly sights.

Who needs Hollywood to scare the bejezus out of us, when Mother Nature is in the director's chair?

Why is all hell breaking loose? Depends who you ask.

The global warming industry blames us — you, me, our cars, our houses and our employers — though it's pretty busy these days explaining away fraud and fuzzy facts.

Who cares what Al Gore says anymore? And how does car exhaust cause earthquakes, exactly?

The doomsayers, god bless 'em, say it's the end. Or the beginning of the end.

Dec. 21, 2012 is a popular bet, according to those who believe that when it comes to planetary demise, what's Mayan is yours.

But pick a date. Someone somewhere is sure it will be our last. This May, October or November, for instance. Oh, and the stock market will collapse on March 31. My, my, and we're still recovering from the Y2K Armageddon.

Pick your poison. Solar eruption, black hole, meteor, supervolcano, megatsunami, supervivins, alien con-



A ship tossed up onto city streets by the tsunami that followed a massive quake is pictured in Kesenuma City, Miyagi Prefecture in northeast Japan yesterday.

REUTERS

quest. Nuclear war seems so lame and passé.

A close relative of the doomsayer is the astrologer.

My soothsaying friend, Anthony Carr, in his book *Stargazer* last year predicted "catastrophic underwater earth-quakes, giant tsunamis and inundations... including Japan and Hawaii, the likes of which we have not seen in recent history."

This, he says, will grip us for 14 years because Neptune, which rules water, is in Pisces and Uranus, which rules upheaval, is in Aries. This alignment was in place in 1883 when Krakatoa, Indonesia, erupted with a

force four times that of the biggest nuclear bomb and killed 40,000 people, mostly in tsunamis.

Believe what you want. But three days before Japan got whacked, astrologers fretted about the "lunar perigee" March 19, when the moon's orbit will be at its closest to Earth in 19 years.

On Wednesday, Britain's *Daily Mail* reported, "the web was yesterday awash with apocalyptic warnings that the movement of the moon will trigger tidal waves, volcanic eruptions and even earthquakes next week."

Well, Japan may have jumped the gun a bit. But, yikes.

Scientists scoff. "There's nothing going on out of the ordinary," U.S. seismologist Dr. Daniel McNamara tells Reuters about the string of killer quakes in

the past year, and now in Japan.

The planet's plates grind all the time, he says, with tens of thousands of tremors each year.

Adds Florida geoscientist Grenville Draper: "We've just had bad luck, they've occurred in places near to centres of population and then it becomes news."

Makes sense, I guess. If a calamity falls in a forest, and CNN's not there to report it, does it make any sound?

Tragedy is worse because we're more tuned in to it. And it's our nature to seek patterns, kooky and otherwise, even where none exist.

Maybe. But this flyspeck floating in space sure seems a lot more fragile these days.

Mike Strobel's column runs Wednesday to Friday, and Sunday.

