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## Recent Natural Disasters Serve as Reminders of the Importance of Understanding Earth Science

With Mount St. Helens in Washington venting off steam and Florida experiencing one of the worst hurricane seasons since 1886, newscasts remind us of the restless nature of our dynamic planet. To raise awareness of the importance of Earth sciences to society, Earth Science Week will be held from Oct. 10 through Oct. 16, 2004, celebrating the theme “Living on a Restless Earth: Natural Hazards.”

For the first time in U.S. history, the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr. Charles G. Groat, and the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Administrator) Admiral Charles Lautenbacher, Jr., collaborated to write a statement on the “Importance of Earth Science Education.” The statement, released in recognition of Earth Science Week, is addressed to the American Public. “By 2025, eight billion people will live on Earth,” wrote Groat and Lautenbacher, “If we are to continue to maintain a high quality of life, we need to delve much more deeply into our planet—its processes, its resources, and its environment. Only through Earth science education can students come to understand and appreciate our complex planet.”

Earth scientists, such as volcanologists, meteorologists and seismologists, work to understand and predict natural hazards to minimize their effects on people and property. During Earth Science Week, geoscientists work with students and the general public to help them discover the Earth sciences and become engaged in scientific exploration. Teachers and students explore Earth science with activities and experiments or by having scientists visit their classrooms. Earth Science Week was established by the American Geological Institute in 1998, and is sponsored by the U.S. Geological Survey and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists Foundation, with participation from NASA, NOAA, the National Park Service and many more organizations. For more information about Earth Science Week, visit [www.earthsciweek.org](http://www.earthsciweek.org).

For the entire text of Dr. Groat and Admiral Lautenbacher’s statement, visit:  
<http://www.earthsciweek.org/proclamations/USGSNOAA.pdf>.

The American Geological Institute is a nonprofit federation of 43 member societies that represents more than 120,000 geologists, geophysicists and other Earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice of shared interests in the profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society's use of resources and interaction with the environment.