



ACTUARIAL STANDARDS BOARD

**Actuarial Standard
of Practice
No. 38**

Revised Edition

**Catastrophe Modeling
(for All Practice Areas)**

**Developed by the
Catastrophe Modeling Task Force of the
General Committee of the
Actuarial Standards Board**

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ACTUARIAL STANDARD OF PRACTICE NO. 38

CATASTROPHE MODELING
(FOR ALL PRACTICE AREAS)

STANDARD OF PRACTICE

Section 1. Purpose, Scope, Cross References, and Effective Date

- 1.1 Purpose—This actuarial standard of practice (ASOP or standard) provides guidance to actuaries when performing actuarial services with respect to selecting, using, reviewing, or evaluating **catastrophe models**.
- 1.2 Scope—This ASOP applies to actuaries in any practice area when performing actuarial services with respect to selecting, using, reviewing, or evaluating **catastrophe models** to assess risk, including but not limited to **models** of hurricanes, earthquakes, severe convective storms, terrorist acts, and pandemics. This standard applies to the selection, use, review, or evaluation of **catastrophe models**, whether or not they are proprietary in nature.

If the actuary's actuarial services involve reviewing or evaluating **catastrophe models**, the reviewing or evaluating actuary should apply the guidance in this standard to the extent practicable within the scope of the actuary's assignment.

In addition to this standard, the actuary should follow the guidance in ASOP No. 56, *Modeling*, when selecting, using, reviewing, or evaluating **catastrophe models**. If the actuary determines that the guidance in this ASOP conflicts with the guidance in ASOP No. 56, the guidance of this ASOP will govern.

This standard does not apply to **models** of operational risks. This standard also does not apply to **models** of economic risks that deal with instances of extreme events such as hyperinflation or a stock market collapse.

This standard also does not apply when the actuary is only designing, developing, or modifying a **catastrophe model** (or a portion of a **catastrophe model**).

If the actuary departs from the guidance set forth in this ASOP in order to comply with applicable law (statutes, regulations, and other legally binding authority), or for any other reason, the actuary should refer to section 4. If a conflict exists between this standard and applicable law, the actuary should comply with applicable law.

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- 1.3 Cross References—When this ASOP refers to the provisions of other documents, the reference includes the referenced documents as they may be amended or restated in the future, and any successor to them, by whatever name called. If any amended or restated document differs materially from the originally referenced document, the actuary should consider the guidance in this ASOP to the extent it is applicable and appropriate.
- 1.4 Effective Date—This standard is effective for work performed on or after December 1, 2021.

Section 2. Definitions

The terms below are defined for use in this actuarial standard of practice and appear in bold throughout the ASOP.

- 2.1 Assumption—A type of explicit **input** to a **catastrophe model** that is derived from **data**, represents possibilities based on professional judgment, or may be prescribed by law or others. When derived from **data**, an **assumption** may be statistical, financial, economic, mathematical, or scientific in nature, and may be described as a **parameter**.
- 2.2 Catastrophe Model—A **model** of low-frequency events with high-severity or widespread potential effects. **Catastrophe models** may be used to explain a system, to study effects of different components, or to derive estimates.
- 2.3 Data—Facts or information that are either direct **input** to a **catastrophe model** or inform the selection of **input**. **Data** may be collected from sources such as records, experience, experiments, surveys, observations, benefit plan or policy provisions, or **output** from other **models**.
- 2.4 Expert—One who is qualified by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education to render an opinion concerning the matter at hand.
- 2.5 Input—**Data** or **assumptions** used in a **catastrophe model** to produce **output**.
- 2.6 Intended Purpose—The goal or question, whether generalized or specific, addressed by the **catastrophe model** within the context of the assignment.
- 2.7 Model—A simplified representation of relationships among real world variables, entities, or events using statistical, financial, economic, mathematical, non-quantitative, or scientific concepts and equations. A **model** consists of three components: an information **input** component, which delivers **data** and **assumptions** to the **model**; a processing

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component, which transforms **input** into **output**; and a results component, which translates the **output** into useful business information.

- 2.8 **Output**—The results of the **catastrophe model** including, but not limited to, point estimates, likely or possible ranges, and **data** or **assumptions** (as **input** for other **models**), behavioral expectations, or qualitative criteria on which decisions could be based.
- 2.9 **Parameter**—A type of statistical, financial, economic, mathematical, or scientific value that is used as **input** to **catastrophe models**. Examples of **parameters** include expected values in probability distributions and coefficients of formula variables.

Section 3. Analysis of Issues and Recommended Practices

- 3.1 **Introduction**—In performing actuarial services, the actuary may find it appropriate to select, use, review, or evaluate **catastrophe models**. When selecting, using, reviewing or evaluating a **catastrophe model**, the actuary should do the following:
- a. determine the appropriate level of reliance on **experts**;
 - b. have a basic understanding of the **catastrophe model**;
 - c. evaluate whether the **catastrophe model** is appropriate for the **intended purpose**;
 - d. determine that appropriate validation of the **catastrophe model** and **output** has occurred; and
 - e. determine the appropriate use of the **catastrophe model** and **output**.

The actuary's level of effort in understanding and evaluating a **catastrophe model** should be consistent with the **intended purpose** and the **catastrophe model output's** materiality to the results of the actuarial analysis.

- 3.2 **Catastrophe Models Developed by Experts**—When selecting, using, reviewing, or evaluating a **catastrophe model** developed by **experts**, the actuary should take into account the following:
- a. whether the individual or individuals who developed the **catastrophe model** are **experts** in the applicable field;
 - b. the extent to which the **catastrophe model** has been reviewed or validated by **experts** in the applicable field, including known differences of opinion among

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experts concerning aspects of the **catastrophe model** that could be material to the actuary's use of the **catastrophe model**; and

- c. whether there are industry or regulatory standards that apply to the **catastrophe model** or to the testing or validation of the **catastrophe model**, and whether the **catastrophe model** has been certified as having met such standards.

The actuary may rely on **experts** in the applicable field in the evaluation of items in section 3.2(a)-(c) and should disclose the extent of such reliance.

- 3.3 Understanding of the Catastrophe Model—The actuary should be familiar with the basic components of the **catastrophe model** and understand both the user **input** and the **catastrophe model output**, as discussed below.

- 3.3.1 Catastrophe Model Components—The actuary should be familiar with the basic components of the **catastrophe model** and have an understanding of how such components interrelate within the **catastrophe model**. In addition, the actuary should identify which fields of expertise were used in developing or updating the **catastrophe model** and should make a reasonable effort to determine if the **catastrophe model** is based on generally accepted practices within the applicable fields of expertise. The actuary should also be familiar with how the **catastrophe model** was tested or validated and the level of independent **expert** review and testing.

- 3.3.2 User Input—The actuary should take reasonable steps to confirm that the precision and accuracy of the user **input** are consistent with the **intended purpose** and should refer, as applicable, to ASOP No. 23, *Data Quality*, when selecting, using, or evaluating **data** used in the **catastrophe model**. Certain user **input** may be required to produce **catastrophe model output** for the specific application. User **input** can include **assumptions** or **data**. If the **catastrophe model** requires user **input**, the actuary should evaluate the reasonableness of the user **input** and should have an understanding of the relationship between the user **input** and **catastrophe model output**.

- 3.3.3 Catastrophe Model Output—The actuary should determine that the **catastrophe model output** is consistent with the **intended purpose**.

- 3.4 Appropriateness of the Catastrophe Model for the Intended Purpose—The actuary should evaluate whether the **catastrophe model** is appropriate for the **intended purpose** and take into account the following:

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- 3.4.1. Applicability of Historical Data—To the extent historical **data** are used in the development of the **catastrophe model** or the establishment of **catastrophe model parameters**, the actuary should take into account the adequacy of the historical **data** in representing the range of reasonably expected outcomes consistent with current knowledge about the phenomena being analyzed.
- 3.4.2. Developments in Relevant Fields—The actuary should make a reasonable effort to be aware of significant developments in relevant fields of expertise that are likely to materially affect the **catastrophe model**.
- 3.5 Output Validation— The actuary should validate that the **output** reasonably represents that which is being modeled. Depending on the **intended purpose**, **output** validation may include the following:
- a. comparing **output** to those of an alternative **model(s)**, where appropriate;
 - b. comparing the **output** produced by the **catastrophe model** with historical observations, if applicable;
 - c. comparing the consistency and reasonableness of relationships within the **output**; and
 - d. evaluating the reasonableness of changes in the **output** due to variations in the user **input**.
- 3.6 Appropriate Use of the Catastrophe Model and Output—The actuary should evaluate the reasonableness of the **catastrophe model output**, considering the **input** and the **intended purpose**. The actuary should take into account the limitations of the **catastrophe model** and use professional judgment to determine whether it is appropriate to use the **catastrophe model output**. The actuary should also use professional judgment to determine whether any adjustments to the **catastrophe model output** are needed to meet the **intended purpose**. The actuary should disclose any such adjustments in accordance with section 4.1.
- 3.7 Reliance on Another Actuary—The actuary may rely on another actuary who has selected, used, reviewed, or evaluated the **catastrophe model**. However, the relying actuary should be reasonably satisfied that the other actuary is qualified to select, use, review, or evaluate the **catastrophe model** in accordance with applicable ASOPs, and the **catastrophe model** is appropriate for the **intended purpose**. The actuary should disclose the extent of any such reliance.

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- 3.8 Reliance on Data or Other Information Supplied by Others—When relying on **data** or other information supplied by others, the actuary should refer to ASOP No. 23 and ASOP No. 41, *Actuarial Communications*, for guidance.
- 3.9 Documentation—The actuary should consider preparing and retaining documentation to support compliance with the requirements of section 3 and the disclosure requirements of section 4. If preparing documentation, the actuary should prepare such documentation in a form such that another actuary qualified in the same practice area could assess the reasonableness of the actuary’s work and should document the steps taken to comply with this standard in light of proprietary aspects of the **catastrophe model**, if any. The degree of such documentation should be based on the professional judgment of the actuary and may vary with the complexity and purpose of the actuarial services. In addition, the actuary should refer to ASOP No. 41 for guidance related to the retention of file material other than that which is to be disclosed under section 4.

Section 4. Communications and Disclosures

- 4.1 Required Disclosures in an Actuarial Report—When issuing an actuarial report to which this standard applies, the actuary should refer to ASOP Nos. 23, 41, and 56. In addition, the actuary should disclose the following in such actuarial reports, as appropriate:
- a. the **catastrophe model** used and the **intended purpose**;
 - b. the methodology used to validate the **catastrophe model** developed by **experts** (see section 3.2);
 - c. the extent of reliance on **experts** (see section 3.2);
 - d. a description of the user **input** that was incorporated into the **catastrophe model** (see section 3.3.2);
 - e. a description of adjustments made to the **catastrophe model output** (see section 3.6); and
 - f. the extent of any reliance placed upon the work of another actuary (see section 3.7).
- 4.2 Additional Disclosures in an Actuarial Report—The actuary also should include disclosures in accordance with ASOP No. 41 in an actuarial report for the following circumstances:
- a. if any material **assumption** or method was prescribed by applicable law;

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- b. if the actuary states reliance on other sources and thereby disclaims responsibility for any material **assumption** or method selected by a party other than the actuary; and
 - c. if in the actuary's professional judgment, the actuary has deviated materially from the guidance of this ASOP.
- 4.3 Confidential Information—Nothing in this ASOP is intended to require the actuary to disclose confidential information.