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Documentary data in the study of fatalities caused by meteorological and hydrological events: the Czech Republic, 1964–2019

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Reports from the newspaper “Rudé právo/Právo”, complemented by chronicles, epigraphic evidence, systematic meteorological/hydrological observations, media (including internet), professional reports and papers were used to create a database of fatalities taking place in the course of hydrological and meteorological events over the territory of the Czech Republic during the 1964–2019 period. The spatiotemporal variability of fatalities arising out of floods, flash floods, windstorms, convective storms, lightning, frosts, snow/glaze-ice calamities, avalanches, heats and other events is shown, with particular attention to closer characterisation of fatalities (gender, age, cause of death, place, type of death and behaviour). In the classification of fatalities, males and adults clearly prevail, while indirect victims and hazardous behaviour are strongly represented. Examples of two outstanding events with the highest numbers of fatalities during a flash flood on 9 June 1970 (34 fatalities) and a rain-induced flood in July 1997 (60 fatalities) are described in detail. Discussion of results includes the problem of data uncertainty, factors influencing the numbers of fatalities, and the broader context. The study emphasises the significance of documentary data and reveals its new utilisation in the study of fatalities in the Czech Republic.