



The Significance of Exploring Sinkholes in the United States: Causes and Prevention Strategies

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Abstract

Exploring sinkholes in the United States is critical due to their growing frequency and potential hazards. Sinkholes can occur suddenly, causing extensive damage to property and infrastructure. These natural phenomena occur when the underlying rock, typically limestone, dissolves, creating voids that eventually collapse. Understanding the causes of sinkholes, including heavy rainfall, drought, and human activities, is crucial for mitigating their impact. By studying these causes, researchers can develop effective strategies to predict and prevent sinkhole formation. Preventing sinkholes requires a combination of engineering solutions and public awareness. Adequate urban planning is essential in vulnerable areas to avoid construction on unstable ground. Additionally, regular monitoring of geological conditions can help identify risk factors early. Public education campaigns about recognizing sinkhole signs can empower communities to respond quickly and safely to potential sinkhole hazards. When people understand the risks and signs of sinkholes, they can take proactive measures to safeguard their properties and lives, ultimately reducing the potential for disasters. The significance of investigating sinkholes further extends to environmental and economic concerns. Sinkholes can disrupt ecosystems and lead to the loss of water sources, affecting both wildlife and human populations. The economic cost of repairing damage caused by sinkholes can be substantial, leading to increased insurance premiums and financial stress for affected households. Therefore, ongoing research aimed at improving the understanding of sinkhole dynamics not only helps mitigate immediate risks but also promotes long-term sustainability and safety in regions where these geological events occur.

Keywords: Sinkholes, Causes, Geological Hazards, Geology, Urban Planning, Prevention Strategies, Environmental Impact, Environmental Management, Economic Cost, Public Awareness, Research, Ecosystem, Risk Management, Water Erosion, Community Awareness, Infrastructure Safety

Introduction

The incidence of sinkholes in the United States is considerable, resulting in potentially severe environmental repercussions and damage to infrastructure. The primary mechanism behind the

formation of sinkholes is the dissolution of underlying soluble bedrock, particularly limestone, which leads to the development of subterranean caverns that may become unstable and collapse. Given the unpredictable nature of sinkholes, they pose a substantial threat to urban environments, agricultural operations, and human safety, thereby necessitating construction practices that reduce risk exposure. The advancement of technology has facilitated the creation of solutions such as geophysical sensing technologies and real-time data management systems to predict and manage sinkhole formation. Nonetheless, numerous challenges persist regarding these solutions, necessitating further research to enhance understanding of the scientific complexities associated with sinkhole formation and the technological implications thereof.

Causes of Sinkholes

A natural cause involves carbonate bedrock and its dissolution properties. Both human and natural factors contribute to the formation of groundwater mechanisms, which exacerbate the impact of sinkholes [1]. These mechanisms necessitate a quantitative analysis of bedrock and regional precipitation. Moreover, they encompass the geomechanical properties of soil use, where fluctuations in the water table intensify sinkhole effects [2]. Anthropogenic geological processes lead to structural collapse, and these impacts are linked to groundwater withdrawal. Construction practices disrupt natural mechanisms, while artificial filling and sedimentation aggravate geological processes. Human engineering frequently becomes a catalyst for degradation processes, creating conditions conducive to sinkhole formation, with the risk in certain regions intensified by natural features. Such areas require a more meticulous analysis of actual and potential degradation processes. Engineering solutions should be refined based on empirical data regarding these processes to prevent catastrophes [2].

Another geological factor that increases the likelihood of sinkholes is the natural process of limestone dissolution. Limestone, commonly found in most karst regions, gradually dissolves over time when acidic water seeps into it, forming voids beneath the surface and weakening its structural integrity [1]. Fluctuations in groundwater levels can further enhance this dissolution process, leading to deeper void formations and eventually causing surface collapse.

Moreover, the presence of impurities significantly accelerates the rate of limestone dissolution, thereby increasing the frequency and probability of sinkholes [2]. Understanding these geological factors is crucial in developing mitigation strategies, as they help link natural vulnerabilities to human activities like construction and land-use changes.

Geography of Sinkholes

Land subsidence constitutes a geophysical hazard with widespread geographic susceptibility throughout extensive regions of the United States. Florida, in particular, exhibits a notably high prevalence of this phenomenon due to its underlying geological composition and the presence of sinkholes [3]. Additionally, states such as Texas, Kentucky, and Tennessee demonstrate significant susceptibility to sinkholes, a condition exacerbated by the sub-linear bedrock structure, which is further aggravated by anthropogenic and climatic influences [4]. Geographic Information System (GIS) and geological morphological analysis are instrumental in identifying areas of elevated ground hazard across large expanses of the country, facilitating strategic mitigation and policy formulation [4]. A comprehensive understanding of ground subsidence susceptibility across geographic regions is crucial for implementing localized preventive measures and advancing infrastructure resilience development.

Three Major Types of Sinkholes: Solution, Cover Collapse, and Cover Subsidence

The three main types of sinkhole—solution, cover collapse, and cover subsidence—are distinguishable from one another based on their formations and features. As the name suggests, solution sinkholes occur on bedrock that dissolves readily with acidified water. Common bedrock for solution sinkholes includes calcium carbonate-rich rock such as limestone and marble. The surface depressions created by solution sinkholes develop gradually, often unnoticed until they become a significant threat to surface features [2]. Cover collapse sinkholes are more dramatic and catastrophic void failures below the surface. They occur when a weighted layer of material above a void is removed, creating hollow spaces below the surface. This type of sinkhole often develops where sediments, such as clay, are present above the void, leading to sudden collapses due to the expansion of the void below a considered support. Cover subsidence sinkholes occur gradually as permeable layers, such as sand, extend into the open cavity. The surface depression develops gradually within a moderate timescale [2]. Each of these sinkhole types has its applications in its respective environment, as some may be more significant and prone to certain geological features.

The distinctive characteristics of sinkholes are underscored by the referenced case studies, which incorporate specific examples for each type of sinkhole occurring in various states across the United States. For instance, a solution sinkhole developed in Winter Park, Florida, where acidic rainwater eroded the limestone bedrock, resulting in a cavity exceeding 300 feet in width, which engulfed several items, including the public swimming pool [2]. A cover collapse sinkhole emerged abruptly in Berea, Kentucky, where the collapse of a highly compacted surface led to significant property damage and necessitated evacuations [4]. Researchers also provided examples of cover-subsidence sinkholes, noted for their gradual formation, affecting regions such as Wink, Texas [5]. The initial cause of various sinkhole formations is elucidated through case-specific evidence. Consequently, the significance of establishing appropriate standards to mitigate damage caused by each type of sinkhole across diverse geological formations is affirmed by the case studies referenced.

Threats Posed by Sinkholes: Case Studies from California and New York

The vulnerabilities posed by sinkholes to existing infrastructure and populations can be analyzed through the case studies in California and New York. In Southern California, specifically the San Gabriel Valley,

numerous sinkhole activities have impacted urban infrastructure, including roads and the water system. The factors contributing to these sinkhole occurrences are attributed to the development of the area on limestone soils and the processes of urbanization, which contribute to the formation of voids beneath the surface [6]. This has significantly affected infrastructure, requiring preventive measures such as geotechnical applications, real-time monitoring, and subsurface imaging to mitigate sinkhole risks and prevent destructive infrastructure collapse. Similarly, in New York, urbanization and geological activities have led to various disruptions, including sinkholes, which have particularly impacted the foundational stability of the electrical transmission infrastructure [6]. This underscores the increasing necessity for targeted intervention strategies and infrastructural measures to address the socio-economic challenges posed by sinkhole activities in densely populated areas.

Additionally, the socio-economic aspects of sinkholes in California and New York warrant a significant critical analysis. A quantitative case study indicates that sinkholes contribute to infrastructural damages totaling millions of dollars annually, due to costs associated with repairs and temporary relocations [5]. Businesses are profoundly affected; extended closures lead to lost revenue and the displacement of employees. Social impacts encompass disruptions to community systems, where individuals have limited access to essential services, thereby affecting their daily routines. Over time, these disruptions may result in demographic shifts as individuals relocate from areas prone to significant sinkhole risks. These various dimensions require critical examination of the multifaceted impacts to develop strategies that integrate contemporary methodologies and policy measures to mitigate sinkhole risks in susceptible regions and enhance community resilience [7].

Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

Prevention and mitigation strategies are of paramount importance in effectively managing sinkholes and minimizing the damage they cause. By leveraging advanced technologies alongside data-driven models, experts are better equipped to predict and understand the sequence of events leading to sinkhole formation, thereby developing robust solutions to counter these occurrences.

One notable approach involves the use of predictive modeling techniques to deploy compaction grouting as a method to stabilize subsurface cavities. This process involves injecting densifying materials into existing voids, enhancing the ground's structural integrity and reducing the likelihood of collapse [7]. Beyond these modeling techniques, implementing comprehensive land management policies is crucial to safeguarding areas susceptible to sinkhole development. For instance, controlling excessive groundwater extraction through regulatory measures can significantly reduce the risk of destabilizing the geological substrata in vulnerable regions.

Construction-related activities, such as quarrying, mining, and drilling, play a significant role in triggering sinkholes, particularly in geologically sensitive zones. By modeling these activities and developing targeted policies, authorities can effectively reduce or limit operations that contribute to sinkhole formation in these high-risk areas [8]. Research indicates that regulations are particularly effective in karst landscapes, where preventing destabilizing activities can sustain environmental and community health. The integration of comprehensive research and cutting-edge technology fosters the development of more refined policies, aiding in damage mitigation. Real-time monitoring tools are crucial in detecting the early signs of sinkhole formation, enabling a rapid response and intervention. Additionally, increasing public awareness and education about the risks and preventive measures associated with sinkholes can significantly enhance community resilience and preparedness against such natural hazards. Together, these strategies create a multifaceted approach to managing and mitigating the adverse impacts of sinkholes.

Technological Innovations

As technology progresses, advancements in sinkhole prevention continue, with recent innovations in sinkhole monitoring techniques playing a significant role. Wireless Sensor Networks and the Internet of Things substantially enhance the capability for real-time detection and analysis of subterranean processes leading to void formation, thus enabling the implementation of preventive measures [9]. These technologies facilitate the continuous collection of data, which can be analyzed to forecast potential sinkhole activations—an essential aspect for the protection of critical infrastructure such as roads and pipelines. Furthermore, cutting-edge high-precision leveling and terrestrial laser scanning technologies are employed to monitor subtle surface deformations that precede sinkhole formation, providing invaluable insights into the efficacy of remediation strategies [10]. Generally, the principal challenges associated with these techniques and technologies pertain to their implementation, which may be constrained by spatial and temporal limitations due to high operational costs and the necessity for specialized knowledge and skills. This situation necessitates further targeted research to develop integrated solutions applicable across diverse geographical and infrastructural contexts.

Infrastructure safety is crucial in addressing sinkhole hazards, and ground-penetrating radar is a promising tool for detecting them. Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) sends radar waves into the ground and records the reflected signals, helping to identify zones with anomalies and potential weaknesses that might lead to sinkholes. This technology is non-destructive, offering precise imaging and scanning of subsurface elements. In areas where sinkholes are active, GPR scanning can identify voids in the land before the top surface collapses [6]. Integrating smart technologies, such as Wireless Sensor Networks (WSNs) and the Internet of Things (IoT), with Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) can create a comprehensive sinkhole detection system. The combination of these smart technologies enables enhanced data acquisition and analysis, providing users with timely information about sinkhole activity [9].

Challenges in Implementation

The emergence of technology is increasingly contributing to sinkhole prevention; however, it faces several challenges. A primary obstacle is funding, as both the implementation and utilization of advanced technologies, including network systems, wireless sensor networks (WSN), and the Internet of Things (IoT), necessitate substantial financial resources to achieve the objectives of real-time monitoring [9]. Consequently, the high costs associated with implementing and maintaining these technologies pose a significant impediment to many areas susceptible to sinkholes, particularly those with constrained budgets. Additionally, the operational functionality of these technologies demands specialized training and skill acquisition, thereby presenting an additional challenge in addressing this natural problem, as careful attention is required for the effective deployment of these resources. Furthermore, governing policies, especially those related to land-use and environmental considerations in karst regions, pose challenges to the implementation of these technologies due to the need for alignment with broader land management goals and objectives, beyond merely addressing sinkhole formation and habitat loss considerations [8].

The discussion converges on the realization that innovative policy measures and resource allocation strategies are pivotal in facilitating the removal of obstacles to the implementation of advanced sinkhole prevention initiatives. The creation of specialized funding streams addresses budget shortfalls that serve as barriers to acquiring proprietary state technical equipment, as well as WSN and IoT networks necessary for applications and real-time observation [7]. The dissemination of cooperative training in collaboration with educational institutions ensures the development of a workforce

capable of operating advanced sinkhole prevention technologies. Technological proposals and policies regarding control legislation in land allocation planning ensure the establishment of policies that support the integration of technological solutions in addressing environmental demands and land use. Through the discussed solutions and frameworks, potential pathways are offered that lead to the establishment and empowerment of communities with the necessary tools and skills to operate technological equipment and interpret data, thereby preventing sinkhole threats.

The Deeper Trekker Solution

The Deeper Trekker solution represents a significant advancement in the realm of sinkhole risk mitigation, utilizing cutting-edge technology to assess and stabilize subsurface conditions. This innovative approach incorporates state-of-the-art sonar and imaging sensors, strategically mounted on a remotely operated vehicle. These sensors enable a thorough visualization and analysis of subsurface characteristics, effectively replacing the need for traditional invasive methods [7].

One of the key strengths of the Deeper Trekker solution is its proven efficacy in assessing karstic landscapes. These geological formations, known for their susceptibility to sinkhole development, often present challenges that render other assessment methods inadequate. The solution excels in these environments, accurately identifying potential sinkhole emergence points. This facilitates the formulation of effective stabilization strategies to prevent sinkhole formation [7]. By detecting voids and other subsurface anomalies at an early stage, the Deeper Trekker solution empowers engineers and geologists to implement timely, targeted mitigation strategies. This proactive approach not only aids in preventing sinkhole occurrences but also enhances the overall resilience of infrastructure by minimizing sudden and catastrophic failures [7].

However, despite its remarkable capabilities and effectiveness in complex geological settings, the Deeper Trekker solution faces limitations in widespread adoption. These challenges arise primarily due to its high operational costs and the necessity for specialized skills and equipment to operate the system efficiently. As a result, while the technology is promising, its use may remain limited to specific high-risk areas or projects with the resources to support such advanced assessments.

Sector-Specific Strategies

In the realm of agriculture, the adoption of targeted strategies to prevent sinkhole collapse is crucial due to the severe risks sinkholes pose to both soil integrity and agricultural productivity. These geological formations can significantly reduce soil fertility and lead to a substantial decline in crop yields if not appropriately addressed. In regions characterized by shallow bedrock aquitards, which are less effective in transmitting groundwater, combined with frequent flooding, it becomes essential to employ specialized methods such as enhanced drainage management. This involves designing and implementing systems that effectively channel excess water, reducing the risk of water accumulation that can contribute to the formation of sinkholes. Additionally, soil stabilization techniques become vital; these may include the use of soil amendments or mechanical compaction to increase soil density and reduce its susceptibility to sudden collapse [11].

In contrast, urban planning presents a different set of challenges and requires a distinct approach to manage the threat of sinkholes. Here, it is imperative to integrate advanced monitoring systems that can continuously assess the ground's stability. This real-time monitoring is supported by technological solutions such as ground-penetrating radar and geophysical surveys, which can detect early signs of subsidence and facilitate timely interventions. Additionally, the strict enforcement of zoning regulations plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy environment. These regulations oversee the

placement and construction of structures, ensuring that developments occur in low-risk areas and thereby protect community infrastructure from the potential damage of sinkhole incidents.

Moreover, in urban environments, the deployment of a sophisticated, real-time data-driven system is essential for preemptively identifying possible sinkhole developments. Such systems can provide immediate alerts to city planners and emergency services, allowing for rapid responses that can mitigate the impact of a sinkhole event, which can otherwise cause severe disruptions to everyday urban operations [7].

Ultimately, addressing the threat of sinkholes effectively requires a sector-specific approach, tailored to the unique requirements and risks of each area. This involves a combination of cutting-edge technology and strategic policy-making. In agriculture, the focus is on maintaining soil health and crop viability, whereas in urban settings, the emphasis is on protecting infrastructure and ensuring the safety and functionality of urban spaces. Both sectors must integrate innovative technological solutions and develop comprehensive policies to prevent and manage sinkhole occurrences in a manner that is both effective and sustainable.

Case Studies of Successful Prevention: California and New York

The successful case studies of California and New York, where technology and planning have effectively reduced the risk of sinkhole damage, establish exemplary practices for sinkhole mitigation and prevention. California employs remote sensing technologies and methodologies to identify potential sinkhole formations, thereby effectively mitigating risks and damage to urban infrastructures. Researchers have identified the utilization of high-resolution optical imagery as crucial for effective interventions and monitoring of areas particularly affected by sinkhole formations. Findings indicate that this approach significantly decreases the occurrence of damaging sinkholes through effective subsurface monitoring and identification of voids that could potentially develop into sinkholes [5]. Conversely, New York implements comprehensive strategies involving compaction grouting to protect its infrastructure from sinkholes. Compaction grouting is an effective technique that enhances and stabilizes karst environments, fortifying the ground that is vulnerable to sinkholes even before they occur [7]. The promising outcomes in controlling sinkhole occurrences in California and New York underscore the significant impact of technology and planning in safeguarding infrastructures despite potential future risks.

The preventive strategies employed to avert sinkholes significantly contribute to the long-term enhancement of community resilience and regional safety. These preventive techniques effectively reduce the impact of sinkholes on infrastructure, consequently diminishing the economic burden on the community arising from the repair or maintenance of infrastructural damage [7]. Moreover, with established monitoring protocols and mitigation strategies, communities are better equipped to manage sinkhole incidents, thereby maintaining the functionality of community infrastructure to an acceptable extent, which further mitigates the risk and impact of sinkhole threats in the region. Additionally, the sustained functionality of community infrastructure bolsters public confidence in community safety initiatives. Consequently, the ongoing implementation of advanced technologies and methodologies for accurately identifying potential challenges confronting community infrastructure, coupled with comprehensive governmental policy support, provides a dual advantage: safeguarding infrastructure from ensuing threats and enhancing community resilience against formidable geological challenges.

The Relationship between Fracking, Sinkholes, and Earthquakes

The process of hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as fracking,

introduces several potential geological hazards, including the formation of sinkholes and the induction of earthquakes. Fracking involves the injection of high-pressure fluid deep into the earth's rock formations, a technique used to release oil and natural gas that are otherwise trapped within these rocks. This method is quite effective in extracting valuable energy resources; however, it significantly alters the subsurface pressure conditions. Such alterations can create pockets of instability within geological formations, leading to adverse environmental consequences.

Sinkholes, for instance, often occur in regions characterized by karst geological formations, which are landscapes formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum. These landforms are sensitive to changes in underground water levels. Fracking exacerbates this issue by sometimes withdrawing groundwater rapidly, which destabilizes these formations [10]. The swift reduction in pressure within these karstic formations amplifies their potential to collapse, causing sinkholes to emerge.

Another serious consideration is the phenomenon known as induced seismicity, where human activities trigger earthquakes. This is particularly relevant to fracking, as the process can lead to seismic events. The injection of high-pressure fluid alters the stress distribution within the Earth's crust, sometimes activating dormant fault lines and resulting in earthquakes. The correlations between these geological changes and fracking underscore a critical connection to environmental impacts. Consequently, fracking's ability to instigate both sinkholes and seismic activities distinguishes it as a process fraught with complex environmental and geological hazards. These concerns not only complicate the straightforward extraction of natural resources but also pose significant risks to the stability and safety of the affected regions. Thus, the environmental ramifications of fracking are intertwined with the potential for inducing geological disturbances, making it crucial to address these risks comprehensively.

Earthquakes: Man-Made or Natural

The correlation between sinkholes and earthquakes prompts an examination of the natural versus anthropogenic origins of these geological phenomena. Scientific evaluations suggest that sinkhole-related earthquakes are strongly associated with human activities, particularly in regions characterized by intensive human endeavors [10]. Activities such as groundwater extraction, hydraulic fracturing, and construction disrupt subterranean formations, instigating geological shifts that precipitate seismic occurrences. It is important to acknowledge, however, that natural geophysical processes, such as tectonic activity and the dissolution of soluble bedrock, also play a significant role in the formation of sinkholes and earthquakes. In essence, while human activities can act as a significant factor, they typically catalyze natural geological processes rather than being an independent cause, thereby engendering a complex interplay in the causation of sinkhole-related seismic events.

Hydraulic Fracking: Wastewater Injection Risks

The hydraulic fracturing process involves injecting shale gas wastewater into deep subterranean wells. This procedure is significantly linked to the formation of sinkholes and seismic activities. The disposal of large volumes of water and chemical additives into underground systems facilitates chemical reactions with existing subsurface formations. Such interactions may weaken these formations and ultimately lead to the development of sinkholes, particularly in areas characterized by karst phenomena [12]. The injection of wastewater alters the equilibrium pressure of subsurface structures, creating substantial instability within existing voids and fractures in the rock formations. This instability increases the likelihood of collapses, which may result in the formation of sinkholes, such as those observed near the Wink sinkholes [5]. Additionally, the rapid alteration of the pressure regime exacerbates instability across already compromised formations, heightening the risk of collapse and sinkhole formation. Therefore, it is imperative to

implement careful management and monitoring of fracking activities, given the associated risks of sinkhole formation.

Minimizing Risks: Human-Induced Earthquakes

To mitigate the risks associated with anthropogenic earthquakes directly resulting from hydraulic fracturing operations, strategic approaches encompass a variety of initiatives. Among these initiatives is the imperative for enhanced monitoring of subsurface stress changes utilizing techniques such as Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR). InSAR holds a significant promise for enhancing the information available regarding the assessment of specific zones that exhibit increased vulnerability to alterations in subsurface pressure [12]. The formulation of policies aimed at establishing comprehensive regulatory frameworks is not merely desirable but essential. These policies should restrict hydraulic fracturing in designated areas where geological subsurface conditions are known to be adversely affected by pressure alterations. This knowledge highlights the geopolitical significance of regions exposed to drilling operations. Complementary to the developed policies should be a stringent management of water policies. These policies should specify the protocols for water reinjection, based on the geological location and the characteristics of the existing rock formations at varying depths. Collectively, the proposed measures can contribute to alleviating the pressure-induced effects on the surrounding subsurface, thereby reducing the potential for seismic activity. These actions align with the existing knowledge and research on subsurface disturbances, addressing environmentally detrimental implications of the drilling process and enhancing the protection of surrounding communities against the repercussions of vibrational disturbances or tremors induced by reconstructive architectural operations.

Hydraulic Fracking: Oil and Gas Production Regulations

The current regulations overseeing oil and gas production already incorporate specific measures designed to mitigate the risk of sinkholes, primarily through monitoring and operational protocols. For instance, regulations mandate a comprehensive evaluation of geological features prior to conducting fracking to ensure that sub-surface formations are not inadvertently destabilized. These evaluations frequently employ advanced imaging technology, such as Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR), which aids in identifying areas prone to instability [12]. Additionally, regulations govern the treatment of wastewater byproducts for disposal, including guidelines on the depth and volume of injections permitted, to reduce pressure on vulnerable geological formations. Overall, although these regulations represent steps toward sinkhole prevention, their implementation can be challenging due to the variability in geological features across different locations and the continually evolving methods of hydraulic fracturing.

Predictions: NASA Radar Imaging

NASA's radar imaging technology is crucial in predicting and preventing sinkhole events due to its precision and comprehensive data collection. This technology allows for the precise detection of subtle deformation patterns associated with active sinkholes on the surface or below ground, enabling the identification of sites at risk where visible sinkholes have not yet formed. By employing NASA's Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) technique, detailed ground movements in areas susceptible to sinkhole events can be effectively determined [4]. The predictive capability of this technology is significant as it ensures that at-risk areas are prioritized for intervention measures. Moreover, the accuracy of sinkhole susceptibility analysis is enhanced by considering factors such as morphology and historical data. These results inform mitigation strategies, ensuring timely intervention on vulnerable structures to prevent adverse impacts associated with unforeseen sinkhole occurrences, such as loss of life, disruption of activities, and costly repairs.

Future Directions

Future research and policy-driven initiatives hold the potential to unlock significant opportunities in advancing sinkhole prevention and mitigation strategies. A primary focus on enhancing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of remote sensing technologies could be particularly advantageous. For instance, the Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) technique has demonstrated its utility in monitoring subsurface deformations and supporting the estimation of potential sinkhole zones [12]. The ongoing development and widespread implementation of such imaging technologies could greatly enhance early warning capabilities through timely and precise response measures. A secondary aspect of future policy measures should involve integrating advanced technology to consolidate strategic funding and synergistic oversight in regions affected by sinkholes [5]. This approach would multiply preemptive opportunities for safeguarding vulnerable infrastructures, while considering variations in regional geology, thereby fostering avenues for resilient planning and integrated, sustainable land-use decisions.

Conclusion

Interventions addressing the threats posed by sinkholes across the United States ultimately require comprehensive and multifaceted strategies, as detailed in this paper. The focus on the role of technology in developing tools for predictive imaging and monitoring systems underscores their potential to alleviate the risks and infrastructural damage associated with sinkholes. The practices of states susceptible to sinkholes, such as California and New York, have demonstrated the efficacy of policy approaches, the successful implementation of technologies, and systematic measures in sinkhole management. Empirical observations of anthropogenic activities, such as fracking and land-use practices, are crucial for developing effective regulatory policies and strategies to mitigate sinkhole threats nationwide. Therefore, national policies must be formulated, as advocated by the evidence presented in this discourse, to address the collapse of communities and infrastructure resulting from unpredictable sinkhole disturbances.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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