

North Korea nuclear disaster could kill MILLIONS as radioactive cloud engulfs PLANET

THE catastrophic collapse of North Korea's nuclear testing site may lead to a planetary radioactive disaster that kills millions of people, experts have claimed.

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At least 200 people were killed when an "unfinished" tunnel collapsed at the underground Punggye-ri nuclear test base on September 10, Japanese media report. The collapse killed around 100 workers who were working on the construction of a new tunnel at the site in the north-east North Korea. A further 100 people were killed in a second collapse during a rescue operation, according to Yonhap News Agency. Now there are fears the collapse could have triggered a Fukushima-Chernobyl radioactive leak that threatens lives across the world.

Scientists warned the "unstable" site may **capitulate** after North Korea tested its sixth and largest hydrogen bomb on September 3. Satellite images showed that Kim Jong-un's test considerably weakened the site, based deep under the Mount Mantap. As a result of the collapse, radioactive waste bleeding from cracks in the mountain may be blown towards China, experts warned. Lan Xiaoqing, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics Associate, said a massive explosion caused by the collapse would send radioactive material into the stratosphere. This toxic cloud of radioactive material could "spread to an entire hemisphere", he said. Exposure to high levels of radiation can cause loss of hair, sickness, heart failure and brain damage. Radiation, which is measured in rem, is an invisible, odorless energy that can pollute the air, water and food supply. At 1000 rem, 100% of those exposed will die within 60 days.

Last week senior North Korean diplomat Ri Yong-pil told CN that North Korea's threats of another H-bomb test should be taken "literally". But another test at the Punggye-ri site seems unlikely given reports of its collapse. A researcher, from Peking University, studying the radioactive risk has urged China to take action to limit the deadly fallout. "China cannot sit and wait until the site implodes. Our instruments can detect nuclear fallout when it arrives, but it will be too late by then. "There will be public panic and anger at the government for not taking action. "Maybe the North Koreans themselves have realized that the site cannot take another blow. "If they still want to do it, they have to do it somewhere else." But another test conducted over the Pacific Ocean could pose a global threat – spreading radioactive dust across continents.

Dr Paul Edwards, of Stanford University, said if North Korea does test a nuclear weapon, the "bomb itself can release a lot of dust" damaging to the environment. If dropped on "a forest or a city", the effects could be dramatically more serious, he said. "In those cases the bomb can set off immense fires, and those fires enter the stratosphere," he said. "Once it's up there, it can circle the whole planet, and cause really serious climatic effects."