

South China Morning Post

南華早報

warehouse explosion
Local (Hong Kong News)

Tianjin's hell on earth

Li Jing in Tianjin and Mimi Lau

756 words

14 August 2015

[South China Morning Post](#)

SCMP

2

1

English

(c) 2015 South China Morning Post Publishers Limited, Hong Kong. All rights reserved.

Apocalyptic scenes as chemical explosions with the force of 20 tonnes of TNT rip through mainland port, killing at least 50 and injuring hundreds

Huge chemical blasts – one with the force of more than 20 tonnes of TNT – ripped through the mainland city port of Tianjin killing at least 50 people, including 17 firefighters.

Two massive explosions shortly after 11.30pm on Wednesday in Ruihai International Logistics' hazardous goods warehouse sent huge fireballs into the air.

The city government said 701 people were receiving treatment in hospitals and 71 remained in critical conditions.

Four Hongkongers were among the injured and two remained in hospital.

The fire in Tianjin, 140km southeast of Beijing, spread across 20,000 square metres of an industrial park in the city's port.

Tall plumes of grey and white smoke and a pungent smell lingered more than a day after the blast, requiring rescue personnel and journalists to wear protective masks.

National earthquake authorities recorded tremors created by the blasts and likened the second blast to 21 tonnes of TNT, the first to three tonnes.

Pictures posted online showed fireballs shooting into the sky and victims covered in blood running for their lives.

Cargo containers and thousands of vehicles nearby were blown apart, flipped or burnt down. Windows on office and apartment buildings kilometres away were shattered.

The local government is yet to conclude what caused the explosion. A team of more than 200 military specialists in handling nuclear and biochemical materials has been deployed.

The explosion has prompted questions over how the warehouse could have been built so close to residential buildings.

The Beijing Times said there were at least 700 tonnes of sodium cyanide, a toxic chemical often used in mining to extract gold, in wooden boxes and metal containers at the blast site. Some of the chemical had been detected in a ditch, suggesting leakage.

Residents said they had difficulty breathing, but authorities said the level of six air pollutants in the city remained acceptable. Authorities predicted the prevailing wind would blow pollutants towards the Bohai Sea, away from Beijing.

Witnesses described the blast site as “hell on earth”. Some had initially wondered whether the blast was caused by an earthquake or even a nuclear bomb.

A 66-year-old man who lives on the 13th floor of a residential building within 1.5km of the site said the blast was worse than an earthquake that killed more than 240,000 people decades ago.

“We lived through the Tangshan earthquake in 1976, but last night’s explosion was even more horrific. After the deafening sound, the shockwaves came and windows flew out,” said the man, who hid in the corner of a room with his wife until firefighters came before 3am to fetch them.

A 55-year-old woman said she was literally blown off her bed by the shockwaves. “Even elevator doors within our building were deformed,” she said.

State-run CCTV reported the senior management of Ruihai International Logistics had been detained by authorities.

The Beijing News said more than 36 fire fighters were missing; 17 were confirmed dead.

More than 6,000 residents were evacuated and half were still waiting to be directed to resettlement spots.

More than 1,000 medical staff, including some specialists in burns and orthopaedics from 10 local hospitals had been deployed, according to Tianjin city government officials at a press conference.

More than 1,000 officers from the city’s fire brigade were dispatched and about 400 members of China’s paramilitary forces were helping with the relief and rescue efforts.

President Xi Jinping had told the city authorities to contain the fire and rescue the injured, the China News Service reported.

Ruihai International Logistics says on its website that it was established in 2011 and is an approved company for handling hazardous materials. It says it handles one million tonnes of cargo annually.

Tianjin, with a population of about 15 million, is one of the country’s major ports. It is also one of the mainland’s more modern cities and is connected to the capital two hours’ drive away by a high-speed rail line.

Additional reporting by Samuel Chan

More reports A4

Earthquake authorities recorded the tremors created by the blasts, likening the first, at 11.34pm, to an explosion of three tonnes of TNT, and the second, 34 seconds later, to 21 tonnes. Photo: Yu Xiao/Beijing Youth Daily

South China Morning Post Publishers Limited

Document SCMP000020150813eb8e00057

Search Summary

All of these words

At least one of these words

None of these words

This exact phrase

Tianjin's Hell on Earth

Date

01/01/2000 to 01/01/2017

Source

South China Morning Post - All sources

Author

All Authors

Company

All Companies

Subject

All Subjects

Industry

All Industries

Region

All Regions

Language

All Languages

Results Found

1

Timestamp

12 December 2017 14:28

© 2017 Factiva, Inc. All rights reserved. 