**Nuclear war could lead to human extinction through nuclear winter**

**None 'None** [None; None; None; Nuclear war - Existential Risk Observatory; None; https://www.existentialriskobservatory.org/nuclear-war/; Accessed 06-19-2024; cut by AI] \*double quotes converted to single quotes

Home » Nuclear war Nuclear war was arguably the first existential risk that humanity created. It seems to be a very clear one: a full scale nuclear war leads to human extinction. However, we apply a strict definition of existential risk: only events leading to actual human extinction count. It is actually quite hard to make humanity go completely extinct with nuclear warfare. Cities can get bombed relatively easily, but places with low population density would be much harder to destroy. Therefore, complete extinction because of direct effects of nuclear war, although very important for non-existential reasons, is not the main existential threat. The main route towards **extinction** because of **nuclear** war would probably be nuclear **winter**. In case of a nuclear war, **firestorms** from targeted cities would create giant columns of **smoke** which rise high into the stratosphere. They might remain there for about five years, **blocking** **sunlight**. This could lead to a global **temperature** decrease of seven degrees during those years, after which temperatures would slowly return to normal. This fall in temperature would make growing food impossible in many of the currently most productive areas, probably leading to mass **hunger**. There is a possibility that nuclear war would cause extinction, but the possibility is only very slight, estimated at 0.1% for the next hundred years. Subscribe to our newsletter © 2024 Existential Risk Observatory.