

## **World's Worst Fires and Explosions**

**1666**

Sept. 2, England: "Great Fire of London" destroyed St Paul's Cathedral, etc. Damage £10 million.

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**1835**

Dec. 16, New York City: 530 buildings destroyed by fire.

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**1871**

Oct. 8, Chicago: the "Chicago Fire" burned 17,450 buildings and killed 250 persons; \$196 million in damage.

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**1872**

Nov. 9, Boston: fire destroyed 800 buildings; \$75 million in damage.

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**1876**

Dec. 5, New York City: fire in Brooklyn Theater killed more than 300.

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**1881**

Dec. 8, Vienna: at least 620 died in fire at Ring Theatre.

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**1900**

May 1, Scofield, Utah: explosion of blasting powder in coal mine killed 200.

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**1900**

June 30, Hoboken, N.J.: piers of North German Lloyd Steamship line burned; 326 dead.

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**1903**

Dec. 30, Chicago: Iroquois Theatre fire killed 602.

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**1904**

Feb. 7, Baltimore, Md.: blaze spread through downtown Baltimore. More than 1,500 buildings were destroyed. Damages \$150 million, but no lives lost.

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**1906**

March 10, France: explosion in coal mine in Courrières killed 1,060.

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**1907**

Dec. 6, Monongah, W. Va.: coal mine explosion killed 361.

Dec. 19, Jacobs Creek, Pa.: explosion in coal mine left 239 dead.

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**1908**

Jan. 13, Boyertown, Pa.: fire in Rhoads Opera House killed 170 people who were attending church-sponsored stage performance.

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**1909**

Nov. 13, Cherry, Ill.: explosion in coal mine killed 259.

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**1911**

March 25, New York City: fire in Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fatal to 145.

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**1913**

Oct. 22, Dawson, N.M.: Stag Canon coal mine explosion left 263 dead.

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**1917**

April 10, Eddystone, Pa.: explosion in munitions plant killed 133.

Dec. 6, Halifax Harbor, Nova Scotia: Belgian steamer collided with ammunition ship Mont Blanc, which was carrying over 2,500 tons of explosives. Explosion leveled part of Halifax and

left about 1,600 people dead.

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**1923**

February 8, Dawson, NM; 120 killed in the Stag Canon No. 1 mine explosion

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**1930**

April 21, Columbus, Ohio: fire in Ohio State Penitentiary killed 320 convicts.

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**1937**

March 18, New London, Tex.: explosion de-stroyed schoolhouse; 294 killed.

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**1942**

April 26, Manchuria: explosion in Honkeiko Colliery killed 1,549.

Nov. 28, Boston, Mass.: Coconut Grove nightclub fire killed 491.

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**1944**

July 6, Hartford, Conn.: fire and ensuing stampede in main tent of Ringling Brothers Circus killed 168, injured 487.

July 17, Port Chicago, Calif.: 322 killed when ammunition ships exploded.

Oct. 20, Cleveland: liquid-gas tanks exploded, killing 130.

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**1946**

Dec. 7, Atlanta: fire in Winecoff Hotel killed 119.

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**1947**

March 25, Centralia, Illinois; Centralia No. 5 mine explosion killed 111.

April 16–18, Texas City, Tex.: most of the city destroyed by a fire and subsequent explosion on the French freighter Grandcamp, which was carrying a cargo of ammonium nitrate. At least 516

were killed and over 3,000 injured.

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**1949**

Sept. 2, China: fire on Chongqing (Chungking) waterfront killed 1,700.

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**1951**

December 21, West Frankfurt, Illinois; Orient No. 2 Mine Explosion killed 119.

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**1954**

May 26, off Quonset Point, R.I.: explosion and fire aboard aircraft carrier Bennington killed 103 crewmen.

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**1956**

Aug. 7, Colombia: about 1,100 reported killed when seven army ammunition trucks exploded at Cali.

Aug. 8, Belgium: 262 died in coal mine fire at Marcinelle.

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**1958**

Dec. 1, Chicago: fire at Our Lady of Angels, a Roman Catholic grade school, resulted in deaths of 90 students and 3 nuns.

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**1960**

Jan. 21, Coalbrook, South Africa: coal mine explosion killed 437.

Nov. 13, Syria: 152 children killed in moviehouse fire.

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**1961**

Dec. 17, Niteroi, Brazil: circus fire fatal to 323.

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**1962**

Feb. 7, Saarland, West Germany: coal mine gas explosion killed 298.

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### **1963**

Nov. 9, Japan: explosion in coal mine at Omuta killed 447.

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### **1965**

May 28, India: coal mine fire in state of Bihar killed 375.

June 1, nr. Fukuoka, Japan: coal mine explosion killed 236.

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### **1967**

May 22, Brussels, Belgium: fire in L'Innovation department store left 322 dead.

July 29, off North Vietnam: fire on U.S. carrier Forrestal killed 134.

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### **1969**

Jan. 14, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii: nuclear aircraft carrier Enterprise ripped by explosions; 27 dead, 82 injured.

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### **1970**

Nov. 1, Saint-Laurent-du-Pont, France: fire in dance hall killed 146 young people.

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### **1972**

May 13, Osaka, Japan: 118 people died in fire in nightclub on top floor of Sennichi department store.

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### **1972**

June 6, Wankie, Rhodesia: explosion in coal mine killed 427.

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### **1973**

Nov. 29, Kumamoto, Japan: fire in Taiyo department store killed 101.

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**1974**

Feb. 1, São Paulo, Brazil: fire in upper stories of bank building killed 189 persons, many of whom leaped to their deaths.

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**1975**

Dec. 27, Dhanbad, India: explosion in coal mine followed by flooding from nearby reservoir left 372 dead.

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**1977**

May 28, Southgate, Ky.: fire in Beverly Hills Supper Club; 167 dead.

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**1978**

July 11, Tarragona, Spain: 140 killed at coastal campsite when tank truck carrying liquid gas overturned and exploded.

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**1978**

Aug. 20, Abadan, Iran: nearly 400 killed when arsonists set fire to crowded theater.

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**1982**

Dec. 18–21, Caracas, Venezuela: power-plant fire left 128 dead.

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**1986**

Dec. 31, San Juan, P.R.: fire in Dupont Plaza Hotel set by three employees, killing 96 people.

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**1989**

June 3, Ural Mountains: liquefied petroleum gas leaking from a pipeline running alongside the Trans-Siberian railway near Uta, 72 mi east of Moscow, exploded and destroyed two passing passenger trains. About 500 travelers were killed and 723 injured of an estimated 1,200 passengers on both trains.

Oct. 23, Pasadena, Tex.: a huge explosion followed by a series of others and a raging fire at a plastics manufacturing plant owned by Phillips Petroleum Co. killed 22 and injured more than 80 persons. A large leak of ethylene was presumed to be the cause.

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### **1990**

March 25, New York City: arson fire in the illegal Happy Land Social Club, in the Bronx, killed 87 people.

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### **1993**

May 10, nr. Bangkok, Thailand: fire in doll factory killed at least 187 persons and injured 500 others. World's deadliest factory fire.

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### **1999**

March 24, Chamonix, France: Belgian truck carrying margarine and flour broke out in flames in the Mont Blanc tunnel, trapping dozens of cars. Death toll was at least 42.

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### **2000**

Oct. 12, Aden, Yemen: U.S. Navy destroyer USS Cole was heavily damaged when a small boat loaded with explosives blew up alongside it. Seventeen sailors were killed in what was apparently a deliberate terrorist attack.

Nov. 11, nr. Kaprun, Austria: cable car transporting skiers to the Kitzsteinhorn glacier broke into flames while moving through mountain tunnel. Final death toll reached 156 in what was termed Austria's worst Alpine disaster.

Dec. 25, Luoyang, China: at least 309 people were killed in fire at shopping center. Most of the victims had been attending Christmas party at unlicensed disco in building.

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### **2002**

Jan. 27, Lagos, Nigeria: series of explosions at military depot triggered a stampede from the surrounding neighborhoods. More than 1,000 killed; many of the victims drowned in two muddy canals as they tried to flee.

June 20, Jixi, Heilongjian Province, China: gas explosion at the Chengzihe coal mine killed 111 people. China's mining industry is one of the deadliest; it is estimated that more than 5,000

mining-related deaths occurred in 2001.

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## **2004**

Oct. 20, Mine explosion at the Daping Mine in Henan, Province, China kills 148.

Nov. 28, Mine explosion at Chenjiashan Mine in Shanxi Province, China kills 166.

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## **2005**

Feb. 14, Mine explosion at Sujiawan Colliery in Liaoning Province, China kills 214. The worst mine disaster in more than 60 years. Of the 574 miners working at the time of the blast, 330 escaped unharmed and 244 were trapped.

Nov. 27, Explosion at the Dongfeng Coal Mine in Heilongjiang Province, China kills 171 miners. Some 221 miners were reportedly working underground when the blast went off at 9:40 p.m.

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## **2007**

Nov. 18, Ukraine's worst mining accident, when a methane blast triggered underground fires at the Zasyadko mine, killed 100 miners.

Mar. 19, Methane blast at the Ulyanovskaya mine in Siberia, Russia was the worst mining accident in Russia's modern history killing 110.

Dec. 5, An explosion in a coal mine in Shanxi province's Hongtong county killed 105.

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## **2008**

Feb. 27, Tunlan Coal Mine explosion in north China's Shanxi Province killed 78 and injured 114.

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## **2009**

September, Explosion in the Pingdingshan Coal Group's Xinhua No. 4 pit in the Xinhua District of Pingdingshan City, Henan Province killed 79 miners.

November, Explosion in the Longmei coal mine in Heilongjiang Province killed 108 miners.

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## **2010**

April 5, Explosion in the Massey Energy Company's Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, West Virginia killed 29 miners. Worst US coal mine disaster since December 1970 when 38 miners were killed in the Hurricane Creek Mine in Hyden, Kentucky.

May 8, Explosion in the Rospudskaya coal mine in Western Siberia, Russia killed 90 miners including approximately 20 rescue workers.

June 16, Mine explosion at the San Fernando Mine near Medellin, Colombia kills 73.

November 19, Mine explosion kills 29 miners at the Pike River Coal Company, Pike River Mine near Greymouth, New Zealand.