

Chernobyl 15 years on

Fifteen years ago the world's worst nuclear disaster happened in Chernobyl, which was then part of the Soviet Republic. The number four nuclear **reactor** at Chernobyl exploded. **Radioactive** material which came out of the reactor. This radioactive material covered many European countries. The radioactive material is still dangerous.

The accident at Chernobyl happened early in the morning of April 26th 1986. The engineers who were inside the reactor were doing some tests. During the tests, the reactor exploded. Radioactive material from the reactor fell on Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and many other countries. Thirty-one people died immediately. A lot more people died later. As a result of the Chernobyl accident, a total of about 3.5 million people have died.

Nobody was prepared for the Chernobyl accident. The Soviet government did not want people to worry. They did not tell other countries about the accident at first. But about five days after the accident, scientists in Sweden discovered radioactive material in the **atmosphere**. At last the world knew about the Chernobyl accident.

Most of the radioactive material fell on Belarus. About 40% of the radioactive material fell on other European countries. In countries where it was raining, such as Austria, parts of Sweden, Norway and Wales, the rain made more radioactive material fall to the **ground**.

About five million people were **exposed** to the radioactive material from Chernobyl.

The radioactive material from Chernobyl is still dangerous. Land that is 3,000 kilometers from Chernobyl is still **contaminated**.

Dr Brenda Howard is a scientist who is studying the effects of radiation on farm animals. "The farmers won't be able to sell their animals for another 15 years," Dr Howard says. "That is a total of 30 years since the Chernobyl accident."

The last nuclear reactor at Chernobyl was closed in December last year.

Two new nuclear reactors will be finished soon.

Meanwhile, the exploded reactor at Chernobyl is still very dangerous. About 200 **tons** of radioactive material is under the ground, below the reactor. This radioactive material will remain dangerous for another 100,000 years.