

0. WHAT HAPPENED? - Story Preface

1. THE GREAT ZEPPELINS

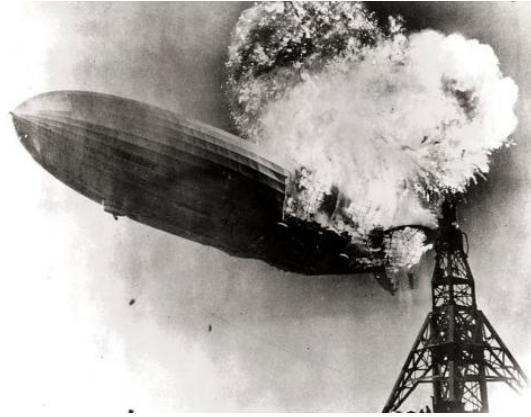
2. THE HINDENBURG

3. HINDENBURG: FIRST TRANS-ATLANTIC FLIGHTS

4. HINDENBURG DISASTER

5. WHAT HAPPENED?

6. WHAT CAUSED IT?



As the *Hindenburg* neared her special mooring tower at Lakehurst Naval Air Station—on May 6, 1937—she suddenly burst into flames. This photo, by Gus Pasquerella, depicts the disaster-in-process.

In addition to eyewitness testimony, archives have movies and still photographs of the [Hindenburg disaster](#). Decades later people still marvel at the magnitude of the tragedy.

Watching the movie we see a horrific tragedy. But what really happened? Following the link to a description of four [key events](#), we learn that:

- A tiny burst of flames was seen at about 7:25 p.m.
- The flames [flames spread rapidly](#) rapidly as the ship remained fairly level
- A huge geyser of flames erupted from midship
- The [downed ship was an inferno](#) within 34 seconds

As Navy and ground crew personnel raced to help the victims, one man (Navy linesman Allen Hagaman) was killed. So were 35 people on board the *Hindenburg* (plus 2 dogs).

Virtually nothing but questions remained, although some of the mail (like this [charred post card](#)) survived.

What had caused this terrible disaster? For years, people believed the most likely cause was the use of hydrogen. Some folks still believe that theory. But a retired NASA scientist recently found a different cause.

Watching the film, examining still photos, reviewing eyewitness testimony and, surprisingly, testing 60-year-old airship covering, [Dr. Addison Bain](#) did not believe the fire's source was hydrogen-related. His conclusions coincide with the findings of Otto Beyersdorff, a German electrical engineer who was part of the team assigned to investigate the fire on behalf of the Third Reich.

There is one fundamental difference in their findings: timing. Beyersdorff reached his conclusion within five weeks of the disaster.

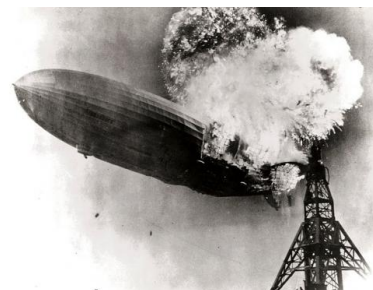
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHAT-HAPPENED-Hindenburg>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHAT-HAPPENED-Hindenburg>

Media Stream

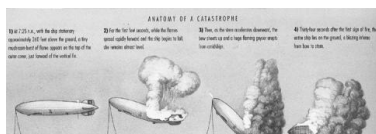


Hindenburg Burning Near Its Mooring Tower

Image online via Lakehurst Naval Air Station; photo by Gus Pasquerella on May 6, 1937.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hindenburg-Burning-Near-Its-Mooring-Tower>



Hindenburg - Timeline of Key Events

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hindenburg-Timeline-of-Key-Events>



Hindenburg Explosion - Flames Spread Rapidly

Image online, courtesy the Smithsonian Institution, National Air and Space Museum.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Hindenburg-Explosion-Flames-Spread-Rapidly>



Hindenburg - A Towering Inferno

Image, described above, online via Amazon. Copyright, Ken Marshall, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new readers with the book.

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Surviving the Hindenburg: Charred Post Card

Image online, courtesy U.S. Postal Museum.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Surviving-the-Hindenburg-Charred-Post-Card>



Hindenburg Expert - Dr. Addison Bain

Image online, courtesy the [Florida Solar Energy Center](#) website.

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Hindenburg Explosion - As It Happened

Historical footage by Herb Morrison (reporter) and Charlie Nehlsen (engineer), captured on lacquer disc.

Clip online, courtesy Archive.org.

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