

Stunning Sinkholes by Sarah Wassner Flynn



What do you notice is happening in this photograph?

A blue truck is going down a city street. Then...*bam!* It falls into a hole. The truck's driver has just seconds to get out before the truck is almost swallowed by the street.

The truck fell into a **sinkhole**. A sinkhole is a pit in the ground. It happens when Earth's top layer falls apart. This can cause damage in the street. The layers below the street can no longer support the road. And in seconds, a few cracks in the street turn into a hole as big as a truck.

Underneath It All

Sinkholes open up when water breaks down a rock layer underground. Groundwater or leaky pipes cause the rock to wear away. The top layer has nothing to hold it up. Then, gravity takes over. The land caves in. Sinkholes form slowly. But the damage comes fast and usually without warning.



Most sinkholes occur in areas where the landscape is made of limestone.

Man-made or Natural?

Some sinkholes are **man-made**. They are caused by human action, like construction. Sinkholes in city streets are often man-made. Once, a sinkhole swallowed a factory! Leaky sewer pipes were the cause.

Natural sinkholes happen where the land is made of rock that is easily broken, like limestone. Most of Florida sits on limestone. There is even an area of the state called Sinkhole Alley! Land by The Dead Sea in the Middle East also has a lot of sinkholes. It is made mostly of rock salt. This is easily dissolved by water.

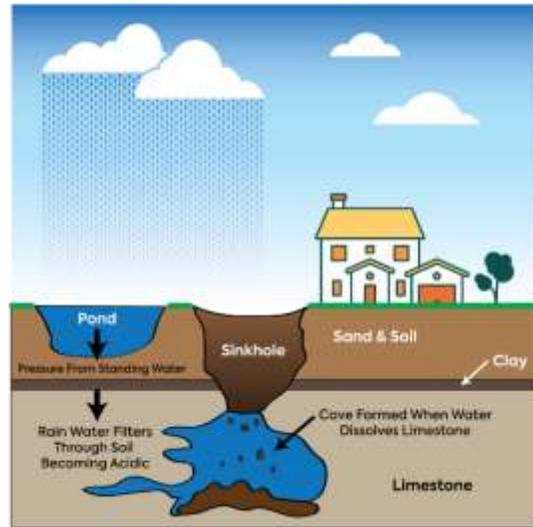
Huge Holes

Some sinkholes are very deep. One in China is as deep as a building is tall! Some sinkholes are underwater. The Great Blue Hole in the Caribbean Sea could hold two jumbo jets. Not all sinkholes are huge. Some are just three feet deep. Any hole in the ground caused by water erosion is a sinkhole. Size doesn't matter.



The Great Blue Hole is one of the largest underwater sinkholes in the world.

How A Sinkhole Forms



This diagram gives a look into how sinkholes form and what is going on underground.

Stopping Sinkholes?

Can sinkholes be stopped? Sometimes. People can take scans of underground areas. This may show warning signs. Hopefully, that may stop sinkholes from swallowing cars in the future.