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Unexplained explosion and fire destroy world's second largest pharmaceutical factory producing precursors for hydroxychloroquine

By [Thomas Lifson](#)

Prepare for supplies to tighten for the cheap, effective therapeutic treatment for early-stage COVID-19 infection, hydroxychloroquine (HCQ). Just as the medical establishment in the U.S. is [relaxing](#) its absurd and lethal suppression of the cheap, generic drug, following President Trump's endorsement of it early in the pandemic, HCQ's continued availability may suffer. The world's second largest pharmaceutical facility producing the precursors for HCQ has been destroyed by an explosion and fire.

[Taiwan English News](#) reports:

An explosion at a pharmaceutical factory in Taoyuan City left two injured and caused a fire early this afternoon, December 20.

People as far as Tamsui District in New Taipei City reported hearing the massive blast shortly after noon. Immediately after the blast, thick black smoke could be seen pouring out of the SCI Pharmtech factory. (snip)

The cause of the explosion is currently under investigation.

Liberty Times reported that the factory produces hydroxychloroquine APIs [active pharmaceutical ingredients — TL], and is the world's second largest HCQ raw material supplier.



Photo via [Taiwan English News](#).

A [subsequent report](#) indicates that one of the injured workers, a Filipino guest worker who suffered third-degree burns over 90% of his body, has died. The explosion broke out around noon and set off subsequent explosions in volatile substances nearby.

The [Taipei Times](#) reports that company spokesmen state, "[I]t would take at least six months to rebuild the plant, as most production lines were damaged by the fire[.]"

Supplies may be tight, as the SCI Pharmtech had already expanded production and sales of HCQ APIs to meet growing demand:

The company reported cumulative revenue of NT\$2.61 billion in the first 11 months of this year, up 18.19 percent from NT\$2.21 billion in the same period last year, thanks to steady shipments of APIs for hydroxychloroquine

The cause of the fire is under investigation. Given the explosive character of some of the ingredients, there may well be a perfectly innocent explanation for the fire. But a six-month delay in resuming production may delay HCQ supplies to early stage COVID-19 patients, who could otherwise treat their affliction with it, combined with zinc and an antibiotic like azithromycin.

I've been to Taoyuan and visited industrial facilities there. It is very close to Taipei Taoyuan International Airport, the major international airport serving Taipei and Taiwan, and also to [Hsinchu Science Park](#), a high-tech Mecca, housing over 400 companies. This area is highly sophisticated and prosperous and has a bullet train station connecting it to central Taipei in about half an hour's travel time. It is not at all some third-world backwater; quite the contrary.