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New York City sinking four millimetres a year – 29th May 2023

Level 4

New York City is sinking by up to four millimetres a year because of its skyscrapers. Its 1,080,000 buildings weigh around 764 billion kilograms. There is additional weight from furniture, transport infrastructure, and the city's 8.5 million people. Dr Tom Parsons said the slow sinking plus rising sea levels could mean New York has more natural disasters. New buildings could increase flooding especially along coasts.

Researchers compared New York to Venice and Jakarta. Venice is flooding more despite a new \$5.3 billion system of sea walls. Indonesia is building a new capital because Jakarta is sinking. The UN forecast that 70 per cent of the world will live in cities by 2050. Dr Parsons said when a city gets full of people, "you end up with subsidence." He said New York was typical of a place where many people move to.

Level 5

New York City is sinking by up to four millimetres a year under the weight of all its skyscrapers. The United States Geological Survey calculated New York has around 1,080,000 buildings. They weigh around 764 billion kilograms. There is additional weight from furniture, the transport infrastructure, and the weight of the city's 8.5 million inhabitants. Dr Tom Parsons said the gradual sinking and rising sea levels could make New York prone to natural disasters. He said new high-rise buildings could increase flood risks, especially along coasts and rivers.

The researchers compared New York City to Venice and Jakarta. Venice is experiencing more floods despite its new \$5.3 billion system of sea walls. Indonesia is building a new capital city from scratch because Jakarta is sinking. The United Nations forecast that 70 per cent of the world's population will live in cities by 2050. Dr Parsons said: "When you build a city and it gets full of people, you end up with subsidence." He said New York was typical of a place where many people move to and then has a high concentration of new buildings.

Level 6

Scientists say New York City is sinking by up to four millimetres a year under the weight of all its skyscrapers. A team of geophysicists from the United States Geological Survey calculated that there are 1,084,954 buildings in the city, weighing around 764 billion kilograms. This weight does not include fixtures and fittings in buildings, the transport infrastructure, or the weight of the city's 8.5 million inhabitants. Lead researcher Dr Tom Parsons said the gradual subsidence, coupled with rising sea levels, could make New York prone to natural disasters. He warned that "every additional high-rise building could contribute to future flood risk," especially along coastal and riverfront areas.

The researchers compared what is happening to New York to the problems Venice and Jakarta are having. Venice is experiencing more floods despite the construction of a \$5.3 billion system of sea walls. Indonesia is building a new capital city from scratch because Jakarta is sinking. The United Nations has forecast that 70 per cent of the world's population will inhabit cities by 2050. Parsons said: "When you build a city and it gets full of people, you end up with subsidence." He warned that New York City was "emblematic of a place that people migrate to and that obviously has a high concentration of construction." Increasing urbanisation will exacerbate problems for cities.