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Minister demands explanation for windmill collapse

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The climate minister will begin an investigation into two separate cases of Vestas wind turbines collapsing within the past week

The climate minister, Connie Hedegaard, is calling for an investigation to determine the cause of two violent wind turbine collapses in Denmark in the past week.

Both of the windmills were produced by Vestas, and Hedegaard's request to the Energy Board comes after other breakdowns both here and abroad have been reported in the past two months.

'The problems with the turbines abroad have had to do with poor maintenance, and if that's the case here, then I expect a clear report on how we can ensure this problem is rectified,' Hedegaard told Berlingske Tidende newspaper

Her comments come on the heels of the government's new energy agreement ratified by parliament last week, which calls for the country to have 20 percent of its energy produced by sustainable sources by 2011.

In first of the two collapses, near the city of Århus, a 10-year-old windmill began spinning out of control during high winds. A recording of the explosion-like collapse shows one of the wing blades breaking off, casting debris into the three other wings and shearing the 60- metre tower nearly in half.

Vestas itself will also now conduct an internal investigation to determine why the wind turbines have been breaking down.

'We've still got about 35,000 wind turbines across the globe that are operating fine,' said Peter Wenzel Kruse, Vestas's spokesperson. 'But they're not infallible. We're doing what we can and learning from our mistakes.'

Farmer Keld Boye, who lives in Vig where the latest incident occurred on Sunday, was clearly shaken by the wind turbine's implosion.

'I drive my tractor and my wife rides horses out there,' he said. 'Just think if we'd been out there when it happened.'