

# **GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN A RADIATION EMERGENCY**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Information) Regulations 2001 (REPPIR) came into effect on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001.

Regulation 17 of REPPIR relates to general duties on local authorities to have arrangements to provide information about any kind of radiation emergency, and replaces the requirements under the Public Information for Radiation Emergencies Regulations 1992 (PIRER).

This section outlines the information requirements and methods of dissemination required under these arrangements.

Local authorities need to ensure that the arrangements for information provision of the various bodies involved come together in a complementary and comprehensive way.

There is no requirement for local authorities to prepare the information and advice themselves.

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## **2. ACTION IN THE EVENT OF A RADIATION INCIDENT**

### **NOTIFICATION**

Notification of a radiation incident may come from a variety of sources depending on the nature and scale of the incident. In a wide area incident, notification is most likely to come from the Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network (RIMNET) – See Annex F.

Exeter City Council Environmental Health, and Cornwall County Council receive RIMNET messages, subsequent information, and advice bulletins, which are cascaded to other local authorities.

### **RESPONSE**

The response to an incident involving radiation will be in accordance with existing multi-agency major incident procedures and national arrangements.

On notification of a radiation incident a Joint Health Advisory Cell (JHAC) will be convened – See Annex A.

### **POLICE LED OPERATION**

In many incidents, e.g. a transport related accident or a deliberate release, the police will lead the response.

### **NON POLICE LED OPERATION**

In some incidents, e.g. a radiological release from a civil nuclear site, a relevant government department may lead the response.

### **LEAD GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

The response to a radiation incident may also involve the following lead government departments:

Civil nuclear installations in England and Wales	Department of Trade and Industry
Transport accidents in Britain	Department for Transport
Accidents involving military material or establishments	Ministry of Defence
Nuclear Installations overseas	DEFRA

## **ANNEX A – JOINT HEALTH ADVISORY CELL**

A Joint Health Advisory Cell (JHAC) will be required to collate and co-ordinate information to inform the response to the incident and provide public information.

### **ACTIVATION**

The Joint Health Advisory Cell will be established in accordance with the principles in Section 1 of the Joint Agency CBRN Plan.

Audio conferencing must be considered in the initial stages of the incident.

### **LOCATION**

#### **Police led operation**

The Joint Health Advisory Cell will be located at Gold if established - normally located at Police Headquarters, Middlemoor, Exeter.

The Chair of the Joint Health Advisory Cell will attend the Gold multi-agency Co-ordinating Group.

Appropriate Joint Health Advisory Cell representation will also be required at Silver.

#### **Non Police led operation**

The Joint Health Advisory Cell will require a secure location with extensive communications facilities.

If appropriate, and depending on the nature and location of the incident the Joint Health Advisory Cell will be located at a Primary Care Trust office or other premises.

Other agencies must be notified of the location of the Joint Health Advisory Cell.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Public information strategy is shown at Annex B

County Council/Unitary Authority representatives on the Joint Health Advisory Cell must ensure public information is provided in accordance with the requirements listed at Annex C

## **ANNEX B - INFORMATION STRATEGY**

### **INFORMATION CO-ORDINATION - POLICE LED INCIDENT**

Public information, press statements, and the establishment of Helplines will be co-ordinated by the Incident Commander at Gold in liaison with the Joint Health Advisory Cell.

The Chair of the Joint Health Advisory Cell will attend the Gold multi-agency Co-ordinating Group.

### **INFORMATION CO-ORDINATION - NON POLICE LEAD INCIDENT**

The Joint Health Advisory Cell will co-ordinate public information, press statements, and the establishment of Helplines.

County Council/Unitary Authority representatives on the Joint Health Advisory Cell must ensure public information is provided in accordance with the requirements listed at Annexes C and D

### **INFORMATION DELIVERY**

#### **Public Address Systems**

In localised incidents, it may be necessary to provide initial information e.g. regarding shelter/evacuation by using PA systems on police vehicles (if fitted).

Other methods of information delivery must also be used.

#### **News media**

##### **Radio and television**

Radio and Television should be used to provide initial public information and updates on the incident.

Press and Public Relations Officers will have contact details for national and local news media.

##### **Government News Network (GNN)**

The Government News Network acts as a regional arm of press offices of Government Departments in Whitehall and elsewhere and supports Government Offices for the Regions in their co-ordination and policy delivery programmes.

They also have a support, briefing and monitoring role in national emergencies acting alongside the Cabinet Office's News Co-ordination Centre.

Press Statements

The co-ordinating authority will produce joint agency press releases.

Individual agencies will be responsible for responding to media enquiries regarding specific activities being undertaken by them. Copies of all press statements should be sent to the co-ordinating authority.

### **Helplines**

Contact details for relevant helplines will need to be made available to the public via the news media.

Helplines will require regular, consistent, and accurate information from the co-ordinating authority.

Helplines managers must notify the co-ordinating authority of any significant issues or information received from the public.

### **NHS Direct**

NHS Direct should be used to provide health related information.

### **Casualty Bureau**

In the event of significant numbers of people being displaced or fatalities occurring, the police will establish a casualty bureau.

### **Local Authority Help Lines**

Local authorities can establish Helplines to assist in the provision of general information to the public, and specific information regarding local authority activities.

### **Information leaflets**

In localised incidents, consideration may be given to providing public information in the form of a leaflet or information sheet.

Consideration should be given to the size of print (14 point minimum) to ensure people with visual impairments can read the information.

Consideration should also be given to people whose first language is not English.

A leaflet setting out the basic facts about radioactivity and its effects on persons and on the environment is at Annex E.

## **ANNEX C - INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED IN THE EVENT OF A RADIATION EMERGENCY**

The following information is required to comply with Regulation 17 and Schedule 10 of REPPIR.

### **GENERAL**

- Information must be directed towards those members of the public actually affected by the emergency i.e. whose co-operation is sought in implementing health protection measures.
- Information must be given to members of the public immediately.
- Information must continue to be supplied in a way that is regular, appropriate, timely, and unprompted.
- In most cases information will be provided through bulletins relayed on local radio and television stations, supplemented by other methods as appropriate.
- The information supplied is to ensure those people actually affected by a radiation emergency are informed promptly of the facts of the emergency, of the steps being taken to mitigate the consequences, and the measures that are to be taken for their health protection.

### **SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

- Information on the type of emergency which has occurred, and, where possible its characteristics, for example, its origins, extent, and probable development.
- Advice on health protection measures, which, depending on the type of emergency, might include;
  - Any restrictions on the consumption of certain foodstuffs and water supply likely to be contaminated;
  - Any basic rules on hygiene and decontamination;
  - Any recommendations to stay indoors;
  - The distribution and use of protective substances;
  - Any evacuation arrangements;
  - Special warnings for certain population groups.
- Individuals cannot be compelled to co-operate with any health protection measures that have been decided on (such as evacuation), but any announcements should make it clear that this is authoritative advice, which it is in their interest to follow.

- Where an occurrence which is likely to give rise to a release of radioactivity or ionising radiation has happened but no release has yet taken place, the information and advice should include the following:
  - An invitation to tune in to radio or television;
  - Preparatory advice to establishments with particular collective responsibilities, such as schools, factories, commercial buildings, hospitals, GP's, accommodation for people with special needs, etc.
  - Recommendations to occupational groups particularly affected, such as children and pregnant women with regard to food and drink consumption, and farmers in relation to their crops and livestock.
- Also consider particular establishments as priority places for the receipt of information about an incident, including its magnitude, likely impact and guidance on steps to be taken.
- If time permits, information setting out the basic facts about radioactivity and its effects on persons and on the environment.
- Although the duty placed on local authorities relates to those actually affected by an incident, the needs of the wider community should not be overlooked.

## **ANNEX D - PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENTS**

Public information statements should be provided as soon as possible following an event occurring. Reference should also be made to Annex B – Information to be Supplied in The Event of a Radiation Emergency.

In the earliest stages members of the public in the area should be advised to **Go in, Stay in and Tune in.**

As more information becomes available and an information strategy is developed, information should include:

- Where the incident has occurred
- What has happened, e.g. a release of radioactive material
- Who is responding to the incident
- Precautionary measures to be taken, e.g.
  - Go indoors and stay there until you are told it is safe to go outside
  - Close windows, doors, and ventilators. Switch off any air conditioning systems drawing air from outside the building
  - Listen to the local radio or television, and follow any instructions given
  - Put out or damp down fires and boilers
  - Keep pets inside to stop them bringing possible contamination into the house
  - Do not use the telephone unless you urgently need help
  - Do not leave the area unless advised to do so (see over)
  - Parents of children at school should not to go to schools. Children will be looked after at the school
  - Do not eat opened or uncovered food or drink
  - Wash all utensils before using
  - Wash hands before preparing food
  - Do not use garden produce that has been outside
- When further announcements will be made and through what media, channels, frequencies, stations etc.

- Telephone numbers for urgent enquiries
- When precautions are no longer necessary.

## **EVACUATION**

In the event of an evacuation advice should include:

- Where to go
- Use own transport
- Assembly points if transport required
- Pack the following things:
  - A supply of warm clothing and bedding
  - Any special food that your family needs
  - Any medicines that your family needs
  - Baby food, clothes and nappies if needed
  - Private documents and special valuables
- Make sure that fires are out and cookers, ventilation fans, TV's, electric fires and other electric appliances are switched off and unplugged.
- Lock up the house and any other buildings and leave.

## **ANNEX E - PUBLIC INFORMATION LEAFLET**

A leaflet setting out the basic facts about radiation and its effects on people and the environment is attached overleaf.

Information in the leaflet is based on information from the Health Protection Agency, and the Devonport Public Safety Scheme public information leaflet (July 1999).

The leaflet can be reproduced locally and given to members of the public as required.

**(Note – The leaflet is intended to be printed double sided, and folded to form an A5 leaflet. Ensure when copying that the text is orientated correctly on both sides).**

- **Stable Iodine:** Iodine normally collects in the thyroid gland. If radioactive iodine is released following a reactor accident, taking stable (non-radioactive) iodine tablets prevents this happening. Taking of stable iodine is combined with sheltering and evacuation.
- **Food bans:** Radioactive material deposited on soil or grass finds its way into food through crops and animals. It might be necessary to ban milk or other foods containing too much radioactive material.

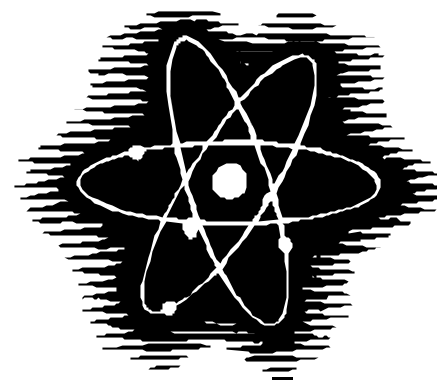
The responding agencies must ensure that the most appropriate countermeasures are taken.

Any action to protect the public will have benefits but also harm associated with it. Action is taken when the benefits outweigh the harm.

Further information is available from the Health Protection Agency website – [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

**Notes:**

*Developed by the Devon and Cornwall Local Resilience Forum  
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# ***RADIATION***

## **A public information guide**

**Produced by the Devon and Cornwall  
Local Resilience Forum**

## ATOMS AND RADIATION

- Everything is made up of tiny building blocks called atoms.
- Each atom is made up of electrons, protons and neutrons.
- Some atoms are naturally unstable. They can change into atoms of another element by getting rid of some of their protons, neutrons and electrons. When this happens the atom gives off radiation.
- Everybody receives a small amount of natural radiation.

## EXPOSURE TO RADIATION

When radioactive materials are released in an accident, people can be irradiated in the following ways:

- Through breathing contaminated air and gases.
- Having contact with contaminated surfaces.
- By eating food or drinking contaminated food or water.
- By direct exposure to radiation.

## EFFECTS OF RADIATION

- Radiation can cause changes to molecules and tissue.
- One type of change that can be produced is ionisation.
- For example, ionised water molecules in tissue are chemically very reactive and are called Free Radicals. Free Radicals can damage other molecules.

- Ionisation can also change or affect DNA, the molecule that contains the information used to control our growth and development.
- All this can lead to biological effects such as cell changes.
- It is possible that these changes will not show up until some further time after exposure to radiation.
- Different radiation can cause different effects.
- Some parts of the body are more sensitive to radiation than other parts of the body.
- Studies have shown that the risks from exposure to radiation increase with the radiation dose.

## COUNTERMEASURES

In an incident involving the release of radioactive material, the following actions may be taken to reduce radiation dose:

- **Sheltering:** Staying in with doors and windows closed provides short-term protection from breathing in radioactive material in the air. It also gives protection from direct radiation from radioactive material in the air and on the ground.
- **Evacuation:** Evacuation avoids relatively high short-term exposures by taking people away from the affected area.

## **ANNEX F - RADIOACTIVE INCIDENT MONITORING NETWORK (RIMNET)**

RIMNET is the national monitoring and nuclear emergency response system, set up as part of the National Response Plan following the Chernobyl accident. The Secretary of State for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is the lead Government Officer in the event of a nuclear incident abroad.

The RIMNET system independently detects radioactivity resulting from any accident affecting the UK through 92 monitoring sites around the country. The network raises an alert if abnormal increases are noted. The UK also has bilateral early notification agreements with the Danish, Dutch, French, Norwegian, and Russian governments.

Following notification or detection of an overseas nuclear incident, an initial assessment of possible consequences for the UK will be carried out. If assessment indicates there will be no significant effect on the UK, information bulletins will be issued. If it is possible that there will be significant effects on the UK, appropriate warning messages will be issued to official bodies and the public, and the National Response Plan mechanisms will be activated.

### **NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN**

- If an incident is declared, a Technical Co-ordination Centre, staffed by representatives from Government departments and agencies with specific responsibilities, will be set up in a DEFRA building, along with an Information Centre, and Ministerial Briefing Unit.
- Additional monitoring will be initiated to allow the radiological effects of the incident on the UK to be established.
- The analysed results will be passed to the Technical Co-ordination Centre to enable it to co-ordinate decision-making on any actions necessary to safeguard public health and other necessary interest.
- Staff in the Technical Co-ordination Centre will prepare regular information and advice for official bodies, the public and the media. The Information Centre will disseminate this information.

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY ALERTING PROCEDURE**

- Exeter City Council Environmental Health and Cornwall County Council receive initial Government alert messages, and subsequent information and advice bulletins. These are cascaded to other local authorities.
- Other local authorities must have arrangements in place to receive and disseminate such alert messages to appropriate persons within their authority.
- Subsequent action will be determined by information received from the DEFRA Information Centre.