



A FACT SHEET FOR HOUSEHOLDERS
The essential points of reference have been summarised on the last page. Please keep this where you can find it.

DEVONPORT LOCAL LIAISON COMMITTEE

The Devonport Local Liaison Committee consists of representatives of the Royal Navy, Devonport Management Limited and all those national and local authorities (including elected Councillors) involved in the organisation to protect the public in the event of an accident. The Committee is responsible for informing the public about nuclear safety at Devonport, for explaining the risks involved in the unlikely event of an accidental release of radioactivity, and for creating the administrative machinery for the protection of the population in the event of such an accident. The Liaison Committee meets annually.

The nuclear safety plans approved by the Local Liaison Committee are tested and evaluated regularly in nuclear accident exercises. These exercises last for some hours and they are followed by intensive reviews which seek to identify the scope for improvements revealed by the exercises.

The Liaison Committee has decided that the public at large should know more about its activities on their behalf and this leaflet issued by Plymouth City Council is one means of achieving this.

NOTICE

To all local Householders concerning
the arrangements in the event of a
Dockyard Nuclear Emergency

Distributed to all Householders
and businesses within the
City of Plymouth

*Thought this would
interest you!*

In this pamphlet are outlined the plans that exist for helping and protecting people in the very unlikely event of a submarine nuclear reactor accident in the Dockyard.

WHY WE NEED A PUBLIC SAFETY SCHEME

Most people in the Plymouth area know that nuclear-powered submarines have been berthed and re-fitted in the Naval Dockyard for some years. Successful work of this kind requires meticulous adherence to safety rules and consistent workmanship of the highest standard. The Dockyard workforce has demonstrated their competence in the successful completion of a large number of refits.

Stringent precautions are observed when working with nuclear reactors and the closest attention is paid to safety requirements in the design, construction, and operation of naval nuclear reactors. The risks of an accident occurring are therefore kept to a minimum: indeed, no accident resulting in the release of radioactive material into the environment involving the reactor of a Royal Naval Submarine has ever happened in Plymouth, nor indeed anywhere else. However, despite all precautions a very small risk of an accident remains, comprehensive plans are therefore made to contain and deal with an accident and to protect people from its consequences.

These plans have been agreed by the Devonport Local Liaison Committee, and are regularly exercised and tested. The Devonport Public Safety Scheme is available for reference in the Public Library. It outlines the arrangements that would be put in hand to protect the public in the unlikely event of a submarine accident.

Please keep in mind that the reactor in a submarine cannot explode like a nuclear bomb by the very nature of its design. The worst possible consequence of a nuclear reactor accident is the release of radioactive gas and dust into the air around the submarine. However, it is much more likely that these substances would remain confined within the hull of the submarine.

WARNING OF A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT

If there is a nuclear accident on a submarine the Dockyard siren will give the 'emergency' signal by sounding an interrupted (10 seconds on/10 seconds off) warning note.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE DOCKYARD IN A NUCLEAR EMERGENCY?

The Dockyard workforce would be sent home immediately if an emergency were to be declared. This would enable them to reassure their families and would also clear the way for the emergency services to deal with the accident. Certain key people, including Naval personnel and most of the Dockyard Senior Managers, would remain in the Yard as they have duties within the emergency scheme.

WHAT HAPPENS OUTSIDE THE DOCKYARD?

The plans to protect the public outside the Dockyard would be implemented by the civil authorities, who will operate from the Local Accident Headquarters (LAHQ) which would be established in Fort Austin. In an emergency the LAHQ is in direct and continuous contact with the nuclear safety teams in the Dockyard who would advise the civil authorities of the extent and severity of the radiological hazard.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

On hearing the 'emergency' warning (or being told reliably that it has sounded) members of the public should:-

- (1) Go indoors right away or stay indoors.
- (2) Close all external doors and windows and switch off any fans.
- (3) Stay indoors, until told by the Police that you may leave. This will give you the best protection in the first few hours, until radioactivity in the atmosphere has dispersed.
- (4) Switch on your radio or TV (or both). If possible tune to Plymouth Sound or Radio Devon; but national radio and TV are also expected to cover the emergency. Listen for information about the situation and guidance on crops and foodstuffs. (Tapwater supplies will not be affected by a reactor accident).

Some members of the public who are immediately down wind of the accident may be advised to take potassium iodate tablets. The tablets will be distributed by a team of Health and Local Authority workers. These tablets are completely harmless and will lessen the effects of radioactive substances you may have inhaled. The tablets should be taken right away but will still have some beneficial effect if taken up to 10 hours after the accident.

WHAT ABOUT EVACUATION

It is most unlikely that in the event of an accident it will be necessary to evacuate people from their homes. There will be no immediate danger. However, should evacuation become necessary the Police will be responsible for contacting the residents concerned. Evacuees will be advised to use their own transport wherever possible, but transport will be arranged by the Police where necessary. The dangers arising from panic evacuation are far greater than any possible radiation hazards.

The Local Authorities will make arrangements for feeding and accommodating all persons from the affected area, but families who may wish to stay with friends or relatives will obviously be free to do so. Special arrangements will be made by the Police and District Health Authority for the care of the aged, sick and disabled. Arrangements will also be made to ensure that family members not present at the time of the evacuation e.g. children at school, etc. are reunited with their families.

ENTRY TO EVACUATED SECTORS

Entry to any evacuated sectors during the emergency will normally be restricted to persons having compelling reasons for doing so. Entry procedures will be agreed by the Naval Authorities and the Police.

INFORMATION CENTRES

In the remote event of a nuclear emergency, the Local Authority will set up a Public Information Centre to deal with queries from the local population. This will be situated at the Civic Centre. Local householders will be informed of the relevant telephone number by public announcement. Information about D.M.L. personnel will be obtained by telephoning Plymouth 553740 or 605665.

END OF THE EMERGENCY

When the emergency is over, the public will be advised that special precautions are no longer required.

KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

It is important to stress that the risk of any nuclear accident on board a submarine is very small and the risk of such an accident having effects beyond the Dockyard is smaller still. Nevertheless, to guard against the small residual risk, contingency plans have been developed to safeguard the public against the effects of an accident, and these plans are exercised regularly. There has never been an RN submarine reactor accident, and the precautions enforced in the Dockyard are designed to preserve the record.

PLEASE KEEP THIS SHEET
WHERE YOU CAN FIND IT!

GENERAL ADVICE IF THERE IS A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT ON BOARD A SUBMARINE

WARNING SIGNAL

A nuclear accident is very unlikely, but if it should happen the first warning will be given by the Dockyard siren sounding an interrupted (10 seconds on/10 seconds off) warning note.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

If such a warning is given you should:-

- (1) Go indoors, or make your way home, and close all external doors and windows. Switch off any ventilating fans.
- (2) Switch on your radio/TV - tune the radio to Plymouth Sound (261 m, 97 MHz VHF or 1152 AM) or BBC Radio Devon (351 m or 103.4 MHz VHF) if possible - and listen for any special information.

If you live/work in the area close to the submarine berths you could be asked to:-

- (1) Take potassium iodate tablets. These are quite harmless and will be issued to lessen the effects of certain substances that may have been released during the accident. The dose is one-half tablet for babies up to 6 months, one whole tablet for infants up to 4 years and two tablets for older children and adults.
- (2) Leave your house/premises temporarily. This is unlikely to happen. If it is necessary, the Police will notify you and give you the necessary help and guidance. If you do have to leave your house you should take the same sensible precautions that you would normally do when leaving it unattended. There will be adequate time for these precautions to be taken - and appropriate policing to safeguard empty property.

GENERALLY

The Nuclear Accident Organisation will make safety checks over the Plymouth area for as long as it is necessary to safeguard everyone in the area.

In the event of a nuclear emergency you can ask for help/information by telephoning the Public Information Centre at Plymouth Civic Centre. Telephone Number 668000.

You will be informed of this number by public announcement. Information about DML personnel can be obtained by telephoning Plymouth 553740 or 605665.