

by ALAN THOMSON

DEVONPORT MP David Jamieson today criticised defence chiefs for not providing copies of a new nuclear emergency pamphlet to every home in Plymouth and parts of South East Cornwall.

The Ministry of Defence pamphlet - "What to do in a Nuclear Emergency" - was launched yesterday and gives practical advice on what to do in the event of a major leak from a Devonport submarine's nuclear reactor.

The MoD plans to distribute the pamphlets to 30,000 households Devonport, Keyham, Weston Mill, Barne Barton, St Budeaux and Torpoint.

But Labour MP Mr Jamieson said: "We all remember Chernobyl and, although it is not directly comparable, we are still talking about airborne radiation.

"Distribution of these pamphlets seems to be very limited. Is the MoD saying that the wind will carry radiation to Weston Mill but not to Honicknowle?"

"Although I agree that the chances of such an incident happening are very remote I cannot see why the pamphlets should not go to every Plymouth household and beyond."

In announcing details of the pamphlet yesterday Captain David Hall, Chief Staff Officer (Nuclear), said: "In the very, very unlikely event that some radioactive material was released into the atmosphere it would, in all probability, expand in a plume.

Expensive

"We believe this plume would be limited and have a very low probability even of making 2 kms."

Today a spokesman for the MoD in Plymouth said: "Logistically it would have been a nightmare to distribute pamphlets to every home, as well as terribly expensive."

Copies of the pamphlet will be available for reference at all Plymouth public libraries alongside further and more detailed information in the Devon Public Safety plans.

The Plymouth Nuclear Dump Information Group (DIG) said that while the MoD admitted the risks, the pamphlet failed to address the scale of a potential accident.

The pamphlet was produced in response to EC and Government directives covering safety procedures for what it calls "reasonably foreseeable incidents" and the MoD produced it in conjunction with local authorities, including Plymouth City Council.

'Limited' nuclear pamphlet criticised

Guide aimed at cutting risks

THE six-page "What To Do In A Nuclear Emergency" pamphlet dropping through some 30,000 Plymouth and Torpoint letter boxes next week is a step-by-step reference guide to minimising the risks of radiation poisoning.

The pamphlet briefly outlines what could happen in the event of a nuclear submarine accident and then lists nine dos and don'ts under the heading "What You May Need To Do."

These include:

- Do not attempt to pick up children from school as teachers and police will ensure they are looked after.
- Go indoors, close all windows and doors, switch off fans and ventilators, damp down fires or heaters drawing air from outside, keep pets indoors.
- Do not use the telephone since this may jam vital communication lines. Listen to local radio and TV for further advice.
- Take potassium iodate tablets which help the body reject some radioactivity. Stocks will be held locally.
- If evacuation is ordered, people are expected where possible to use their own transport.

The pamphlet also contains a "First Actions" card and further public information.

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HERALD COMMENT

Leaflets to ease nuclear concern

WITHOUT getting involved in scare-mongering over the possibility or the extent of a radiation accident in the Devonport nuclear complex, distribution of advisory pamphlets does seem to have been meagre.

Thirty thousand leaflets would cover a third of the city's households, not to mention those across the water in South East Cornwall.

The projected spread of wind-borne contamination seems quite arbitrary and apparently very limited.

It seems to imply faith in an unusual fickleness on the part of wind direction and strength and of weather conditions at the time of an unpredictable event.

The official theory is that even if there were a leak, the windborn radiation would not spread more than a mile and a quarter down-wind.

at is an assumption that many will be unhappy to have made for them. It seems a remarkably short distance bearing in mind the much wider dispersion of fallout from other incidents, major and minor.

It also seems short sighted to be meagre with the pamphlets.

Plymouthians have lived for years with the threat of annihilation if the cold war had become hot. They are not liable to panic and can be trusted to react sensibly . . . provided they know the score.

As things stand, if something did go wrong and the experts were wrong in their prediction of the spread of the hazard, tens of thousands would not know what to do.

When there are practical steps that can be taken in the event of an accident, no matter how unlikely, the majority will accept the situation.

Keep them, apparently, in the dark and they feel a justifiable sense of grievance.

Wider distribution of the pamphlets would go a good way to resolving any unease.