

PREPARE FOR A CLYDE DISASTER

THE Clyde submarine base at Faslane is to prepare for a full-scale nuclear disaster.

In a massive exercise involving the Armed Forces and emergency services, military planners have created a Domsday scenario.

They will be asked to tackle a fully armed nuclear sub which has a reactor facing meltdown. And they will be warned that any resulting explosion would put millions of people in the West of Scotland at risk.

The immediate task facing the emergency team is to evacuate 5000 people from Faslane. They then

Nuclear base exercise to plan tragedy

By JIM MCLEAN

have three days to cool the reactor or face disaster.

Military planners have described the November 17 exercise as "one of the biggest ever".

Local and national government, including the Cabinet, will be fully

informed. Top Scottish Office politicians and George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, are expected to monitor the rescue and recovery operations.

Fire chief Stuart MacDonald, Divisional Officer with North Command, based in Clydebank

said: "God forbid if it ever did happen."

Local services around the base face total disruption as nearby communities of Rhin and Helensburgh become focal points for rescuers. It's believed there are contingency plans to evacuate residents from some areas.

Sharpen

A spokeswoman for the MOD at Faslane said realism plays an important part in the exercises, which are designed to sharpen reflexes in case the real thing should ever happen.

"The scenario involves a submarine's nuclear reactor. Part of the exercise will be to evacuate the base, which has about 5000 people in it and people on board ships."

Protesters from the Faslane Peace Camp may prove to be a thorn in the side of the exercise, should they retaliate against eviction orders with a policy of non co-operation.

Local Argyll and Bute councillor Andrew MacNicol, of Dunoon, said "There were always fears of a real disaster."

"I remember hearing an alarm go off at the base at 2pm. Regular tests are made around 10am. It turned out that one of the subs had nearly suffered a reactor meltdown and it was a for real situation."

"I didn't know what to do. Luckily that situation was fixed. But it's a fear we have to live with" Councillor MacNicol added.