

N-sub accident 'could pollute 60-mile radius'

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AN ACCIDENT in a nuclear submarine could cause radioactive contamination in breach of safety limits more than 60 miles away, according to confidential naval training documents.

This is far wider than previously admitted and puts millions of people throughout Britain at risk. Nuclear-powered submarines are based at Plymouth, on the Clyde near Glasgow, and at Rosyth near Edinburgh, as well as having berths at Southampton, Portsmouth, Torbay, Cardiff, Liverpool, Skye and the Shetlands.

In a report by the Royal Naval College in Greenwich for a training course on nuclear accidents, a "worst case" scenario is suggested in which radiation in excess of the emergency action levels would spread beyond 100 kilometres (62 miles). It says "the entire contents of a reactor compartment could be released in a very short time (minutes)."

This contrasts with state-

ments on Wednesday by naval officials launching a nuclear emergency pamphlet for 30,000 households near the Devonport submarine yard in Plymouth. They assumed that contamination would not spread more than two kilometres and that an accident would take "quite some time" to develop.

The Ministry of Defence has previously told local authorities that people up to 10 kilometres from an accident could be affected. But the probability of such an accident is said to be about once in every million years of reactor operation.

The ministry said yesterday that the scenario in the training documents, which are marked restricted, was "a theoretical accident which is virtually inconceivable". Its probability was so small as to defy precise calculation.

The documents were revealed by the Scotsman newspaper yesterday a few hours before the Defence Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, officially opened a £1.7 billion plant for Trident nuclear submarines at Faslane on the Clyde.

the Trident base at Faslane on the Clyde yesterday. But could affect millions

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