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PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 1994

PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR RADIATION EMERGENCIES REGULATIONS 1992
(PIRER)

REPORT OF THE COUNTY EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The PIRER Regulations, Statutory Instrument 1992 Number 2297, came into force on 1 January 1993 to be effective from 1 July 1993. Since then consultation procedures with relevant site operator have been and are taking place. Because the arrangements within Hampshire are now well advanced it is appropriate that this report has been brought to Committee.

1.2 PIRER has three main elements: a definition of a radiation emergency a requirement for information to be made available to the public, and a statement of the type of information to be made available. A full set of the Regulations is held by the Emergency Planning Unit, with a summary below.

2. GENERAL REGULATIONS CONTENTS

2.1 Definition of a Radiation Emergency. PIRER defines a radiation emergency as an occurrence which is likely to result in any member of the public being exposed to ionising radiation arising from that occurrence in excess of dose levels set in Schedule One to the Regulations.

2.2 When Information is to be Supplied and by Whom. Before any incident, the site operator must provide relevant information to members of the public who, in the opinion of the Health and Safety Executive, are liable to be affected by a radiation emergency arising from an incident at the site. The site operator must consult both County Council and appropriate District Councils in drawing up the information, and must endeavour to reach agreement with the District for distribution of the information, but remains responsible for its accuracy. The information must be updated at least every three years. The County Council is responsible for preparing and keeping in date arrangements to supply information to the public when an emergency happens. During an incident information is to be supplied to the affected members of the public without delay, without their having to request it, and at regular intervals.

2.3 The Type of Information to be Supplied. Schedule 2 of the Regulations specifies the information to be supplied prior to an emergency, including: basic facts about radioactivity, effect on people and the environment, measures envisaged to alert, protect, and assist the public in the event of an emergency, and action to be taken by the public in the event of an emergency.

2.4 Information to be supplied during an emergency includes: the

type of emergency, its extent, and likely development, health protection measures, recommendations to co-operate with instructions or requests by the competent authorities, and if time permits the basic facts about radioactivity. For incidents which have not, but are likely to give rise to a release of radioactivity, information should include advice to tune into radio or TV and preparatory advice.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR HAMPSHIRE

3.1 There are three sites within or close enough to Hampshire to which the PIRER regulations might apply, namely, AWE Aldermaston and the nuclear-powered warship berths at Portsmouth and Southampton. It is understood that the Health and Safety Executive has agreed with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) that the distance applicable for a nuclear powered warship at these berths is 550 metres, hence the berth in Portsmouth Naval Base is not a PIRER site as this zone does not contain any non MOD buildings or housing. Clarification of this position has been sought from, and confirmed by, the Health and Safety Executive. Nevertheless, the PORTSAFE Plan, which would be activated in the event of an incident at this berth, contains the requirement for public information.

3.2 At AWE Aldermaston PIRER applies out to 3km, which includes some Hampshire communities, the largest being Tadley. Relevant information has been distributed by AWE with the support of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. An excellent liaison is maintained between AWE, Berkshire County Council and the Hampshire local authorities in the emergency planning field, which culminated recently in a joint exercise to test the off-site plan. Participants included members of the Hampshire Police, Fire, Ambulance and Emergency Planning organisations, together with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council officers. The Emergency Planning Unit contributed to the exercise planning and provided one of the 4 syndicate leaders for the actual exercise. The Unit also attends AWE's annual presentation of radiation records and contributed to the original off-site plan and its recent update. PIRER requirements are covered by the AWE off-site plan, although the Unit has recently proposed an amendment to make the PIRER requirements more visible.

3.3 At Southampton the 550 metre zone around the designated nuclear warship berth includes some public commercial premises so the PIRER regulations apply. The Ministry of Defence as "site operator" is responsible for the production of the relevant information, and Southampton City Council has agreed to distribute it. Again the Emergency Planning Unit is in the lead in co-ordinating the necessary arrangements all parties having agreed that I will represent both County and District Councils in on-going discussions. The MOD have made an undertaking that they will not send any nuclear powered warship to Southampton until the necessary PIRER information is provided and distributed.

3.4 It is anticipated that, with the much reduced nuclear submarine force now remaining, this will be a relatively low MOD priority.

4 SUMMARY OF HAMPSHIRE'S POSITION

4.1 We have maintained close touch with the Health and Safety Executive on this subject and we are confident that Hampshire County Council is in compliance with the Regulations. We maintain close links with all authorities involved, and are actively engaged and involved whenever plans are being updated or tested. The warship berth at Southampton will not be used again until arrangements are complete; that at Portsmouth is not allowed to be used for more than 56 days a year, nor are repairs to the reactor allowed to be undertaken at either Portsmouth or Southampton. Irrespective of the low risk both adjoining District Councils and the County Council regularly take part in exercises and discussions with both Naval and

Ministry of Defence Officers associated with both berths. At Aldermaston the accident which could release radioactivity outside the site boundary has a theoretical probability of once every one hundred thousand years. Nevertheless, as a small insurance premium precautions must continue to be taken and the PIRER arrangements together with the continuing development of improved liaison arrangement between AWE, the local communities and ourselves will ensure that the appropriate emergency response plans are in place and public fear and suspicion may be allayed as much as possible.

4.2 Overall, the PIRER regulations have made little impact on the contingency arrangements already in place in Hampshire but in those two specific locations at which the regulations apply, the necessary arrangements are in place or are in a high state of preparedness.

RECOMMENDATION

That the contents of this report be noted.



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