

# 'EMERGENCY GUIDELINES WERE IGNORED' — Claims Provost

## 'No Real Emergency' — says Base

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**Dumbarton District Council Provost Pat O'Neill has criticised the Ministry of Defence's tight lipped handling of Sunday's radioactive scare.**

The Ministry failed to inform local authorities, the fire brigade and the area's hospitals of the leak despite media reports that emergency services had been placed on stand by. Helensburgh police were told of the incident.

Provost O'Neill has written to Commodore Clyde, John Trewby, expressing his concern that neither Dumbarton District Council nor Strathclyde Regional Council's Emergency Planning Officers were informed of the incident at the time. Both learned later of the accident through the media.

Provost O'Neill told the Advertiser: "I was very concerned by the fact that local emergency planning officers were not informed."

"Local authorities have a statutory duty regarding the safety of local communities in the event of a nuclear accident and I have written to Commodore Clyde seeking an explanation of his failure to notify our emergency planning officer Mr Watters."

He added: "For a body which seeks to have good relations with local authorities it is regrettable that the Ministry of Defence did not see fit to keep the district council informed of the incident."

John McFall MP is also to quiz Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind over the failure to implement the Clyde Public Safety Scheme.

Said Mr McFall: "If the public are to have any confidence in the scheme, surely the local authority, the police and the hospitals should have been alerted."

Strathclyde Fire Brigade was not alerted by the Ministry of Defence after the spill despite their close working relationship.

Divisional Officer Kenneth Nicol said: "Strathclyde had no involvement at all."

"It was left to the defence brigade. There was no fire and no incident which required our attendance."

Strathclyde Fire Brigade personnel meet with the MoD every six months to modify plans which would be used to tackle emergencies at the base.

Argyll and Clyde Health Board heard nothing of the incident at the base nor were local hospitals themselves warned.

Faslane Peace Camp has also criticised the base's hush handling of the incident.

A peace camp spokesman, Phil Jones, said: "We accept that this was not a major accident in itself however the interesting thing is that we, the public, didn't hear anything or know it was happening despite there being a full scale nuclear

alert."

"If there had been a major release then they should have been distributing iodine tablets and telling us to stay indoors. But noone heard anything."

"If this had been a major accident a lot of people could have been contaminated. We've just been lucky."

On Tuesday Commodore Clyde met with the local liaison committee, which includes Strathclyde Emergency Planning Officer John McVicar.

Commodore Clyde told the meeting: "The initiation of a full base drill was entirely unnecessary but was at least erring on the safe side; I wouldn't wish to fault anyone for that."

"It was recognised immediately by properly qualified staff on site that a false alarm had been called but once the emergency organisation has been triggered it's very difficult to stop it."

He added: "The net result was that automatic counter measures were initiated and people closed up only to be told that it had not been necessary."

"Although Helensburgh police were advised informally of the incident by the MoD police there had never been any hazard to the public and therefore public emergency authorities were quite rightly not alerted and no press statements were issued."

He continued: "There was never at any time a real emergency and never any threat to the public. It would have been quite wrong of us had we wasted the valuable time of the public emergency services in reacting to a false alarm."