

**HIGHLAND  
HEALTH BOARD**



Dr Dennis Tracey  
Acting CAMO/Director of Public Health

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref:

17 November 1997

Mrs C Macdougall  
Ferindonald House  
Teangue  
ISLE OF SKYE  
IV44 8RF

Dear Mrs Macdougall

**EMERGENCY PLANNING - NUCLEAR ACCIDENT RESPONSE**

Thank you for your letter of 10 November relative to the forthcoming Nuclear Accident Exercise at Faslane.

The Island of Skye 'Z' Berths come under the Scottish Special Safety Scheme and as such are fully covered by the 'SCOTSPECSAFE' Plan.

Packs of Potassium Iodate tablets are held locally on Skye ready for immediate distribution by arrangement with the Navy and Local Police at any time. Other specialist arrangements are made by the Royal Navy during the now very infrequent visits of nuclear submarines. In addition, the SCOTSPECSAFE Plan for the Skye/Wester Ross area is exercised regularly.

Trusting that the foregoing information will satisfy your concerns, but please otherwise feel free to contact me by telephone at 01463-704970.

Yours sincerely



J.A. Morrison  
Emergency Planning Officer

Mrs C Macdougall  
Ferindonald House  
TEANGUE  
Isle of Skye  
IV44 8RF

Please ask for: Mr B T Downie  
Direct Dial: (01463) 713479  
Fax Number: (01463) 243583  
Your Ref:  
Our Ref: BTD/CM 2/15  
Date: 18 November 97

Dear Mrs Macdougall

### Z BERTHS

In response to your letter of 10 November 1997.

The general question of whether or not the United Kingdom should have a nuclear capability is for the government of the day, through parliament, to decide. The elected members of the Highland Council have, neither individually or collectively, any direct input to that decision making process.

There are 5 Z Berths located at various points on the west coast of Highland Council's area.

Z Berths have a variety of functions some are used to allow the crew ashore for a few hours and to enable basic stores eg. food and water to be taken on board. This type of berth is normally a pier.

Some are used to rest the crew, carry out essential maintenance which cannot be done whilst moving, nuclear submarine patrols can last in excess of 2 months, and if there is a major problem with the ship. Such berths are always buoy type, located in areas which are sparsely populated and where the prevailing wind is an offshore wind, in sheltered open water at least 550 metres from the nearest shore.

Every time a nuclear ship anchors at a Z Berth Royal Navy mobile land based radiation monitoring units, normally 2 from Faslane, are positioned adjacent to the berth and remain for the duration of the ships stay.

The possibility of a release of radioactive material from such a ship is very remote. In order for this to happen there would have to be -

1. A major fault in the reactor core control system.
2. A fault and leak in the reactor primary cooling circuit.
3. A fault and leak in the secondary cooling circuit.
4. A leak in the primary containment system.
5. A leak in the secondary containment system.
6. A leak or open hatch in the main hull of the ship.

If all of the above did happen the possible threat to both the local population and to the environment would depend on the direction of the wind and whether or not it was raining.

The reactors on British nuclear warships are very small therefore the amount of radioactive material which they are capable of releasing is also very small.

In comparison to say Chernobyl it would be a minute fraction.

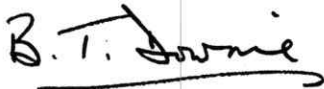
The Highland Council, in conjunction with the uniformed emergency services, the Royal Navy and various other organisations such as the National Radiological Protection Board, are party to a nuclear accident response plan known as "Scotspecsafe".

This plan contains various items of confidential information eg. technical specifications, home telephone numbers of officers and officials and can therefore not be made available to members of the public in it's current form.

The plan and all organisations involved in it are exercised on a regular basis.

A major, three day, nuclear accident exercise, to date the largest ever, was in fact held in Highland on 5, 6 and 7 November 1996 with extensive reports in both the local and national media.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. T. Downie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Mr B T Downie  
Council Emergency Planning Officer

Mrs. C. MacDougall,  
Ferindonald House,  
Teangue,  
SLEAT.  
Isle of Skye.  
IV44 8KF

WF/CAS  
18 November 1997

Dear Mrs. MacDougall,

I thank you for your letter of 10th November, 1997 received 12th November, 1997. Please be advised that in the event of a nuclear "incident" within the Skye and Lochalsh area, initial response would be by Royal Naval personnel, Protective Services Emergency Planning personnel and the Northern Constabulary. Response and on-going actions would be co-ordinated from the Emergency Centre (the Bunker), Inverness.

A response and actions exercise was held approximately three years ago, with all the aforementioned agencies taking part in the exercise.

The Director of the Emergency Planning Service within the Highland Council Area is Mr. Brian Downie, Protective Services, The Highland Council, Inverness. I have spoken this morning to Mr. Downie with regard to your interest in this matter and he would be most willing, should you find the time when visiting Inverness, to show you round our Emergency Centre, or as we refer to it "the Bunker".

I would be grateful if you could give Mr. Downie advance notice of any intention to visit the Bunker. You can contact him by telephoning Protective Services on (01463) 702000. As the Chairman of Protective Services with the responsibility for the Emergency Planning headquarters, I would be very willing to attend when you do pay a visit to the Bunker. It is however not always possible for me to fit in with some dates and times, as I am sure you will appreciate my duties are many and varied and the number of Committees that I attend seems to be ever growing.

I shall copy this letter to Brian Downie in order that he will be aware of the possibility of you visiting his Emergency Centre. It may be that he will also be able to furnish you with some information directly with regard to our response should there be a nuclear incident in the waters or on the land in Skye and Lochalsh.

Kind regards,



BILL FULTON

c.c. Brian Downie, Emergency Planning Officer, Emergency Centre, Raigmore,  
Inverness

**Councillor William Fulton**

Kyle and Sleat