

## **PUBLIC PROTECTION FROM A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT AT SEA IN THE CLYDE**

The letter of promulgation from Captain McFadyen RN in the Clyde Public Safety Scheme (CLYDEPUBSAFE) says that:

“The primary object of the scheme is to safeguard the public not only in the unlikely event of a submarine accident, but also in the event of any other accident in the Clyde Area which might lead to a spread of radioactive contamination to an extent that may interfere with the normal activities of the public” [1].

This would appear to mean that the scheme covers accidents both when submarines are at a designated berth, and also elsewhere at sea. However this is immediately followed by a summary which says that:

“The Clyde Area Public Safety Scheme is designed to cover nuclear submarine accidents at the following berths: Faslane, Coulport, Loch Goil, Campbeltown, Rothesay and Loch Striven.” [2].

With regard to these berths there are some site specific proposals which are identified. However no attempt is made to detail site specific proposals for other communities which are close to where nuclear submarines regularly sail.

On 7th May 1996 the Armed Forces Minister, Nicholas Soames, said that the total usage of all designated berths in Campbeltown, Rothesay and Loch Striven from 1992 to 1994 was 4 days [3]. CLYDEPUBSAFE includes site specific proposals for each of these berths but not for other areas frequented more often by nuclear submarines. Submarines sail several times each week in the Gareloch, Loch Long and between Dunoon and Gourock. They regularly conduct trials in the Degaussing (DG) range at Barons Point near Kilcreggan. Yet CLYDEPUBSAFE contains no site specific proposals for protecting the public from the effects of an accident at sea in any of these areas.

The scheme says that there should be an Automatic Countermeasures Zone around an accident [4]. This is defined as a circle, 550 metres around the site of the accident. In the event of an accident there should be an immediate controlled evacuation of this zone. With regard to identified berths there is some attempt to plan and practice in advance how this might be achieved [5]. However no site specific plans exist for implementing similar protection measures in communities which are within 550 m of channels regularly used by nuclear submarines around the Rosneath peninsula. People living in the following areas are regularly closer than 550 m to nuclear submarines: Clynder, Rosneath, Rosneath caravan site, Portkil, Kilcreggan and Rhu point.

The scheme says that there should be a Pre-planned Countermeasures Zone which extends out to a radius of 2 kms from the potential scene of an accident [6]. With the exception of identified berths no site specific plans exist for communities which are within 2 kms of channels regularly used by nuclear submarines. People living in the following large towns are regularly closer than 2 kms from nuclear submarines: Helensburgh, Gourock, Greenock and Dunoon. Other communities where people are regularly closer than 2 kms from nuclear submarines are: Shandon, Rhu, Clynder, Rosneath, Portkil, Kilcreggan, Cove, Ardentinny, Blairmore, Innellan, Inverkip, Kilchattan and the Isle of Cumbrae.

CLYDEPUBSAFE makes no attempt to list schools, sheltered housing, nursing homes, hospitals or other particularly vulnerable sections of the community within any of these areas.

A large number of children in Belarus suffer from thyroid cancer because of the Chernobyl disaster. Some of these would have been prevented if they had been issued with Potassium Iodate Tablets (PITs) within 1 or 2 hours of the accident. CLYDEPUBSAFE makes no attempt to plan for the distribution of PITs within any of the towns and other communities which are within 2 kms of submarine channels.

The term *Pre-planned* countermeasures implies that this is not something which can be left until an accident happens. The failure to provide site specific plans for communities close to channels regularly used by nuclear submarines is a major weakness in the current scheme.

- [1] CLYDEPUBSAFE July 1997 p (iii)
- [2] CLYDEPUBSAFE p (v)
- [3] Hansard 7 May 1996 column 19
- [4] CLYDEPUBSAFE p 1-12
- [5] CLYDEPUBSAFE chapter 5
- [6] CLYDEPUBSAFE p 1-13

