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Received: (qmail 16378 invoked from network); 16 Oct 1997 18:30:30 -0000
Received: from gn3.gn.apc.org (194.202.158.47)
by depot.dial.pipex.com with SMTP; 16 Oct 1997 18:30:30 -0000
Received: from al154.du.pipex.com [193.130.251.154](al154.du.pipex.com [193.130.251.154])
by gn3.gn.apc.org (8.8.7/8.8.7) with SMTP id RAA05973
for <cndscot@dial.pipex.com>; Thu, 16 Oct 1997 17:43:07 +0100 (BST)
Date: Thu, 16 Oct 1997 17:43:07 +0100 (BST)
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X-Sender: [REDACTED] (Unverified)
X-Mailer: Windows Eudora Version 1.4.4
Mime-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"
To: cndscot@dial.pipex.com
From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Emergency Planning

John

Herewith extract from our papers to NFLA Steering Committee on 22 October.
(NFLA(S) meets on 24 October).



1. Stable Iodine

As reported to the last NSC, in early June the Secretariat circulated a letter to the relevant health authorities seeking views on the arrangements for the distribution of stable iodine.

The ten replies broadly confirm that for the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ):

- in England, plans for door-to-door distribution to a sheltering population have been largely abandoned in favour of predistribution to a limited number of predesignated sites (although there are some examples of predistribution to households where the number of households is small);
- in Scotland, plans still exist for the police to handle door-to-door distribution to a sheltering population (although there are signs of movement away from this); and
- in Wales, updated guidance from the DoH is still awaited.

For beyond the DEPZ, there is a great resistance to any real planning, including (and especially) predistribution to households. None of the

responses specifically replied to the Secretariat's question: Do you consider there is a case for a comparable level of pre-distribution as in France/Switzerland (in 5km zones)?

Nonetheless, the exercise has thrown up some useful contacts. In particular, two consultants in communicable disease from the North Essex Health Authority supplied a copy of the results of their own survey of health authorities and of their resulting assessment of how to move forward. This assessment shows a real attempt by health service professionals to grapple with the issues. Its recommendations are that:

- All strategies are likely to result in some unprotected exposure to irradiation, but predistribution offers the most effective protection to those with immediate access to stable iodine.

- Current local arrangements for the distribution of stable iodine are particularly unsatisfactory and: as an interim measure plans should specify issue of stable iodine on arrival at the decontamination centre; plans should state that distribution to a sheltering population is not feasible; through the DTI led Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group (NEPLG) consideration should be given to predistribution within the DEPZ and/or offering supplies on request; and the health authority should support initiatives for over the counter sales of potassium iodate as recommended by the World Health Organisation.

- Distribution of stable iodine is rarely tested. The health authority should support local authority proposals at the NEPLG for this to become a nuclear licensing requirement.

The Secretariat has subsequently been in correspondence with the North Essex consultants who have agreed that their survey and assessment can be circulated and utilised as appropriate. As a result, the Secretariat has sent the survey and assessment to a number of health authorities to assist them in their current review of plans. The Secretariat has also suggested to the consultants that they submit their survey and assessment to both the DoH and NEPLG so that their deliberations are informed by a proper understanding of the situation on the ground.

Finally, the North Essex consultants have indicated that they have submitted an article for publication in a public health journal. The Secretariat is currently considering the scope for the publication of further articles setting out the need for improvements.

2. Decontamination and Clean-Up

The NRPB has published guidance on Intervention for Recovery After Accidents (Documents on the NRPB, Vol 8 No 1, 1997). The basic substance of the guidance is essentially the same as a draft of October 1996 (which the Secretariat commented upon by letter dated 12 November 1996).

There are, however, a number of changes for the purposes of clarification,

one of which results from Secretariat comments. Contrary to the claim in the October 96 draft, the Secretariat argued that the advice did not provide a "...foundation for planning". This was because it did not explain: whether pre-planning is required and, if so, by whom; and the organisational framework within which the advice would be assessed and acted upon. The final version replaces the phrase "foundation for planning" with the more accurate "framework for decisions".

This still leaves the issue of where the pre-planning and organisational issues will be covered. As a result, the Secretariat has been in correspondence with the NEPLG, which writes that its further guidance on intervention for recovery is not yet available (26 September 1997). A Sub-Group of the NEPLG is considering a draft on 4 November, including the Secretariat's comments on organisational framework.

The original Secretariat comments on the NRPB draft also welcomed its recognition of the importance of social issues, particularly the statement that a "recovery strategy may well be more effective if it is developed in consultation with the affected populations". To all intents and purposes the final advice retains the spirit of the draft. However, the secretariat's original comments highlighted the draft's statement that "the provision of detailed advice on how best to address social issues is beyond the scope of this document". This statement is retained in the final advice. As a result, the Secretariat wrote again to the NRPB asking what plans exist to provide the necessary detailed advice and the NRPB replied on 1 October stating:

"...the Board does not have expertise in Social Psychology...it would not be appropriate for the Board to take the lead in developing the UK's advice on such issues. I therefore suggest you contact the NEPLG."

3. Extendibility of Plans

Following the decision of the last NSC, the Secretariat has written to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate requesting that it be directly included in consultation on the draft revision of guidance on outline planning for an extended response, which is currently anticipated in the first half of 1998.

4. Request for Meeting from the Emergency Planning Society Nuclear Sub-Group

The Secretariat has received a letter dated 1 July from [REDACTED] CEPO for Cumbria, suggesting a meeting to discuss the way in which lobby groups might respond in the event of a nuclear accident. The reason for the request is the EPS Nuclear Sub-Group's concern that lobby groups may "...express reservations about certain aspects of public protection strategy with which the civil authorities were previously unaware or unclear concerning important points of detail", and that this might be detrimental to public confidence.

Following consultation with the Chair, the Secretariat has responded

positively to the proposal for a meeting and agreed to meet with representatives of the EPS Nuclear Sub-Group on Friday 14 November.

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