

Planners get 'worst case' nuclear details

By Severin Carrell

EMERGENCY planners are to be told openly in future of the dangers of radioactive contamination in the theoretical event of a "worst case" nuclear submarine accident.

The move comes after *The Scotsman* revealed this week that three Scottish emergency planning directors had never been told of a restricted Royal Navy manual. That said that a catastrophic accident could spread contamination in excess of 100 kilometres away.

Under that extremely unlikely "worst case" scenario, all people at risk of airborne radioactive iodine would have to be given cancer-preventive potassium iodate tablets within a few hours. That task was branded logistically im-

possible by emergency planners.

A senior defence source said that extra steps would now be taken at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, to make certain students on its Nuclear Accident Procedures Course are told about even hypothetical catastrophic accident scenarios.

The emergency planning directors of Strathclyde, Fife and Lothian regions, who cover the Faslane, Coulpport and Rosyth nuclear submarine facilities, said this week that they had never been notified of the theoretical scenario. Political pressure on the Ministry of Defence intensified after their complaints were supported by the emergency planning officers for Plymouth District Council

and Devon County Council, where the Devonport nuclear dockyard is based.

Referring to official public safety scheme guidelines, Peter Smith, of Plymouth council, said: "Two kilometres is the area we talk about in exercises, and we recognise 10 kilometres, but 100 kilometres has never been an issue."

The defence source said the 100km scenario had been included only from November 1989. He emphasised that the manual had since been made available to all NARP students, including emergency planners from the Scottish regions.

He argued that even if emergency planners were not explicitly made aware of the "worst case" dangers of the manual's contents, Greenwich

could not be blamed if emergency planners failed to examine or take every available document.

He also said that at certain points in the past, Greenwich lecturers had discussed theoretical accident scenarios on the course. But, he added: "Inevitably, as a result of what's happened, people's attention will be drawn to this scenario in the future."

The chief executive of Fife Region, Dr John Markland, said that his officials had unearthed a Greenwich manual which outlined a similar "worst case" scenario to that discussed in the document held by *The Scotsman*.

A Fife spokeswoman said the scenario was couched in obscure language, but added that Fife's emergency plans

would be reviewed in light of its contents

A Strathclyde spokesman again said its officials had no recollection of such documents. He added: "From making such information available explicitly is quite different from saying: 'We're taking you on a course, you may or may not find this information.'"

Councillor Brian Fallon, convenor of the protective services committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, said he had written to Malcolm Rifkind, the Defence Secretary, demanding his officials met Scots emergency planners to discuss the issue.

"We appreciate it is only a very remote possibility," he said, "but all possibilities should be considered."

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