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Safety advice for homes near nuclear bases

By Severin Carrell

LEAFLETS giving safety advice to the public in the event of a serious nuclear submarine accident are to be distributed around the Rosyth and Faslane nuclear submarine centres.

At an announcement in Rosyth yesterday, the Royal Navy said that 2,000 homes within two kilometres of the dockyard's nuclear refitting complex will receive a leaflet setting out emergency procedures should a radiation leak happen.

A similar document will be delivered to homes within two kilometres of the Faslane and Coulport submarine bases on the Clyde next week. The guidance, to be implemented by 1 July, significantly extends the Ministry of Defence's official emergency warning zone of 550 metres from a nuclear area.

The guidance was issued in line with a European Community directive published in November 1989. It was originally due to have been implemented by November 1991, but the Government only passed it on to statute in January this year.

Captain Peter Mansfield, the Royal Navy's nuclear staff officer at Rosyth, stressed the guidance, which has been drafted by the Health and Safety Executive, was not connected with any anticipated announcement about the future of Rosyth as a nuclear refitting centre.

But the EC regulation, and the timing of yesterday's announcement within days of a Cabinet decision on the refit competition, reinforces claims by Rosyth that the safety case of their nuclear refitting bid is greatly strengthened because

relatively few people live within the new zone.

About 5,000 people live within the two-kilometre area around Rosyth. But about 35,000 people live within a similar radius of the nuclear refitting complex at Devonport dockyard, which runs for four miles along the seafront of Plymouth.

It emerged yesterday that a similar announcement at Devonport has been delayed for up to two weeks because of printing problems. People living around Faslane and Coulport submarine bases on the Clyde are to receive their leaflets next week.

The leaflet, being delivered by 30 June, contains a map, information on what could happen, the alarm and actions involved, and advice to stay indoors.

The Rev Adrian Rennie, chairman of the Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, said: "We welcome the announcement. However, we would warn the public against complacency as neither the fence around the base nor a leaflet is going to protect them from a real accident."

Scottish CND said yesterday that the authorities at the Faslane submarine base had no opportunity to carry out a proper inquiry into Sunday's nuclear incident because the vessel involved had set sail at 9am, less than seven hours after the incident took place, writes Denny Macgee.

A full nuclear alert was initially called at the base when coolant from the nuclear reactor of the Polaris submarine HMS Repulse spilled out. It later turned out to be a minor incident.

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N-safety advice

NAVY bosses are to issue nuclear safety advice leaflets to Scots families living near the Faslane and Rosyth sub bases.

The move comes less than 72 hours after the Record's exclusive on last weekend's major scare at Faslane.

Last night Scottish CND welcomed the move, but a spokesman warned: "Neither the fence around the bases nor a leaflet is going to protect the public from a real accident."