

Plea for schools' nuclear exercise

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WMM

A PLYMOUTH school governor has repeated his plea for a nuclear emergency exercise to be held with local schools after a similar move was rejected last year.

Ken Tucker, chairman of the governors of Barne Barton Primary School, says that in the last 12 months the situation at Devonport Dockyard has changed, with plans for a larger nuclear waste store.

He says that it is also possible that the dockyard will be chosen as the sole site for nuclear submarine refitting in future.

In a letter to the Royal Navy's new Flag Officer, Plymouth, Vice Adml Sir Roy Newman, he asks for the matter to be brought up at the Devonport Liaison Committee.

He says that his school and two other primaries are unique in being within a few hundred yards of the Naval base.

Advantages

"They should be given special consideration to ensure the safety and best interest of the young children at all times," he said.

"One of the obvious advantages of a joint emergency exercise would be that of allowing an overall monitoring of the existing local emergency evacuation plan which is very good in theory but has never been actually tested in action."

He said that the schools should also hold supplies of potassium iodate tablets, which are taken to counter the effects of radiation poisoning.

A spokesman for the Royal Navy said Mr Tucker's letter would be brought to the attention of the committee. It was policy to shelter rather than evacuate in the event of a nuclear accident at Devonport.

Action to get nuclear pills to public

by ANN KNIGHT

ANTI-NUCLEAR campaigners are stepping up their efforts to get life-saving iodine salt tablets into homes in Plymouth before an atomic disaster can strike. The nuclear Dump Information Group (DIG) is demanding the urgent distribution of potassium iodate tablets to protect city residents against any possible radiation leak from Devonport Dockyard.

Members of DIG say they are astonished by the city council's recent rejection of their call to hand out its stock of 40,000 tablets, held in a nuclear bunker at Fort Austin.

The council argues against their distribution before a nuclear disaster, because it could cause widespread panic.

They also suggested that people could either lose the tablets or be unable to find them in a real emergency.

However, today DIG has angrily accused the council of acting like Big Brother and of insulting the public's intelligence.

Chaos

The group has produced new statistics to show that nearly 700 people with medical training would be needed to distribute the tablets to all homes within 2km of the dockyard.

"If a serious accident occurred, it would be some time before the council could activate their disaster plans," said DIG chairman Kevin Owen.

"Staff would have to be notified, assembled and dispatched to Fort Austin and then try to distribute the tablets to police and health visitors, who would have to contend with road blocks and traffic chaos."

They insisted: "For the city council to argue that, if distributed before a nuclear disaster, people would lose them or not be able to find them in an

Anger at plan to wait for an atomic crisis

emergency, is absurd and insults public intelligence.

"People would be more alarmed by police wearing breathing masks knocking on their doors in the aftermath and chaos of a nuclear accident, hurriedly shoving packets of pills in their hands and having no time to give proper medical advice."

DIG wants the council to follow the example of Barrow-in-Furness, where tablets have already been handed out to protect against a radiation leak from the local yard which builds nuclear-powered submarines.

The group says the tablets should be distributed with adequate information and advice.