

NATIONAL UKWMO EXERCISES

1. What the UKWMO Does

The United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation has five main functions. These are:

- (i) Warning of a nuclear attack.
- (ii) Providing confirmation of nuclear strikes.
- (iii) Warning the public of any approach of fall-out.
- (iv) Supplying wartime government in Britain and other NATO countries with details of nuclear bursts.
- (v) Provision of a post-attack meteorological service.

Below we explain what is involved in functions (i) - (iv):

Warning of attack:

Warning of an impending attack on this country would be relayed from US satellite warning systems to the UK Regional Air Operations Centre at High Wycombe. From there the warning would be relayed to 'carrier control centres' (CCCs) in 250 major police stations. When the signal has been received, the CCCs alert 18000 power and hand operated sirens sited on police station roofs, Royal Observer Corp (ROC) bunkers, schools, shops and in pubs.

Monitoring nuclear burst and fall-out:

There is a three-tiered, nationwide structure to carry out this task:

- (i) ROC Bunkers: a network of monitoring posts staffed by members of the ROC which chart bomb bursts and radiation levels.
- (ii) Group Controls: assess the information collected at the ROC posts and try to predict the movement of fallout.
- (iii) Sector Controls: collate information from Group Controls and keep the government and NATO authorities informed of attack details.

There are 870 ROC posts up and down the country. Each is responsible for sending information to one of 25 Group Controls. In turn, there are 5 Sector Controls, 4 in England and one in Scotland, each with 5 Group Controls reporting to it. Each Sector Control is co-located with one of its Group Controls (see the Appendix for Group Control locations)

Supplying Government with nuclear burst information:

This task is more closely connected with the conduct of war. Many military bunkers in Britain have attached to them UKWMO 'Nuclear Reporting Cells' (NRCs), which pass details of bomb bursts and fallout. This data is of relevance to 'war fighting'. For example, the USAF and RAF commanders of nuclear bomber bases in Britain wish to know which military and civil airports have survived, to which dispersed or returning planes can go.

2. How to Identify Group Controls and ROC Posts

- a) Group Controls: Apart from lack of windows, there is nothing very conspicuous about the buildings housing Group and Sector

amount of blast and give protection. It has its own stand-by services as well as emergency food and water supply.

- b) **ROC Posts:** The appearance of ROC Posts varies. Some look like small bunkers (4'x4'x4') and are enclosed by short fencing. With others, the only sign of anything unusual above ground are two objects - one resembling a blue plastic dome and the other a white dustbin. (These are devices for measuring radiation levels and charting bomb blasts). Some of the posts have underground concrete chambers, up to 20' below ground, which are reached by a ladder running down a concrete shaft.

### 3. UKWMO Exercises

The **UKWMO** runs exercises several times a year. During the exercises ROC posts and Group Controls are staffed. The aim of the exercises is to test out the communications system between the ROC posts and Group Controls and the procedures for monitoring nuclear blasts and fall-out. ROC members are thus given the opportunity to practice for the 'real thing'.

During the exercises a typical Group Control would be staffed by around 50 people, including about 40 ROC members, scientific advisers, representatives from the Department of the Environment and British Telecom.

In the **UKWMO** exercise in May 1984, approximately 75% of the country's 870 ROC posts were staffed.

County wartime HQs could be involved in **UKWMO** exercises. Although there are no plans for their participation, enthusiastic Emergency Planning Departments can set up their own exercises and ask the **UKWMO** to transmit data to County wartime HQs during the national **UKWMO** exercise.

### 4. Ideas for Action

a) **Identify** Group Control and ROC posts in your area - Regional **CND** secretaries have ordinance survey grid references for the locations of the ROC posts.

b) **Consider** some form of activity at the Group Controls or ROC posts. This could range from leafleting of passers-by, symbolic actions near the bunkers, or actual occupations of the bunker sites. During previous exercises some **CND** groups have sat on top of ROC bunkers dressed as bomb victims with 'blood stained' bandages.

The journey to Barrow is an excellent opportunity to publicise activity.

c) Civil defence disclosures are newsworthy and evoke responses in newspapers, radio and TV. Make sure to issue a press release about your activity with a brief explanation of what a **UKWMO** exercise entails.

d) If you live in a Nuclear Free Zone, contact sympathetic councillors and ask them to find out if any council emergency planning staff are involved in the exercise. There is no legal

obligation on councils to participate in **UKWMO** exercises, so the council can instruct emergency planning staff not to take part.

**IMPORTANT:** Please let our Press Officer, Liz Cochrane know of any activity which you have organised so that we can issue a press statement for Scotland.