

NUCLEAR FREE ZONE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

AGM & CONFERENCE 1988

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS STUDIES

Wednesday 21st September 1988, 9.30 - 11.00 a.m.

Workshop Notes

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Background

The national conference of Nuclear Free Zone Local Authorities has expressed scepticism about the utility of civil defence planning and anxiety that such planning lends unwarranted credibility to the notion that society at large could survive a nuclear conflict. The view was taken that because of the statutory obligations to produce civil defence plans the Local Authorities should not break the law by refusing to do so, but rather should draw attention to the lack of realism in current Home Office advice by obtaining the most realistic information possible on which to base civil defence plans.

The conference resolved that Local Authorities are not in a position to decide how to respond to the 1983 Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations because "the necessary information" has not been released by the Home Office.

While recommending that Local Authorities continue to press the Home Office and Scottish Home and Health Department (SHHD) for the pertinent information the conference advised that detailed local and regional studies would provide the information necessary to make an informed response to the Civil Defence Regulations.

The Nuclear Free Zone National Steering Committee thus recommended that Local Authorities should undertake Planning Assumptions Studies to obtain the necessary information.

Subsequent Home Office guidance in 1986 and 1987 (ES1/1986 and amendments to the EPGLA) restated the requirement for compliance with Civil Defence Regulations but did not provide the additional information sought by Local Authorities. The lack of information in the latest Home Office guidance underlined the need for detailed studies of Planning Assumptions.

### What are Planning Assumptions Studies?

In order to produce credible and realistic Civil Defence plans it is necessary to understand as fully as possible the circumstances which would exist prior to, during and after nuclear attack. Home Office advice on the nature and effects of nuclear attack on the U.K. are inadequate and lacking in detail.

Planning Assumptions Studies are detailed and localised scientific studies of (A) the effects of a period of pre-attack tension and conflict, involving consideration of a range of scenarios; (B) the organisation of civil defence; (C) existing and surviving civil defence resources to cope with the effects of nuclear attack; and, (D) the long-term effects of nuclear attack and the prospects for post-attack recovery. They are intended to provide the necessary detail upon which to base realistic civil defence planning.

To do this Planning Assumptions Studies are based upon computer simulations of two different nuclear attack scenarios which are considered to be realistic and plausible, based on what is known of Soviet nuclear weaponry and targeting philosophy.

These computer simulations take the form of printed A3 maps and overlays which detail national and regional attack patterns. Detailed figures are then provided for the resulting casualties together with destruction and damage of dwellings, energy supply systems, agriculture etc.

To provide flexibility a smaller computer program, which can be run locally on an Amstrad PCW microprocessor, is available which will allow different wind speeds, wind directions, building protection factors and the effects of fire spreads and fire storms to be considered on a scale as small as 1km<sup>2</sup>.

In addition there are a range of technical papers which provide information on the technical basis of the computer programmes and detailed critiques of Home Office planning assumptions.

Finally there are twenty-two National Guidance Papers which have specially written for the NFZ Planning Assumptions Study initiative by academics expert in their individual fields each of which relate to nuclear attack and civil defence.

An individual Planning Assumptions Study is carried out at a local or regional level either by an individual or individuals employed specifically for the purpose or by qualified staff already in the employ of Local Authorities such as Emergency Planning Officers (EPOs). Such individuals use the technical information described above, known as the National Resources and available at a reasonable cost from the National Steering Committee, as the basis for a local study. The information provided by the National Resources is utilised at local level and, together with information collected about existing local civil defence organisation and resources, provides a detailed and comprehensive assessment of the Planning Assumptions upon which to base civil defence plans.

Because of the scale and cost of the work Planning Assumptions Studies to date have been undertaken jointly by groups of County and/or District Authorities and usually take between 18 months and two years to complete.

Which authorities are already involved in a Planning Assumptions Study?

At the present time there are seven studies underway and three more due to start in the near future: Derbyshire, East Scotland, Herts & Essex, London, North West, South Yorkshire, Strathclyde and East Anglia, Midlands (Birmingham) and West Yorkshire. These presently involve twelve County level authorities and more than sixty-five District/Borough authorities.

Why carry out a Planning Assumptions Study?

By proceeding with mandatory Civil Defence planning on the basis of Home Office guidance alone NFZ authorities will be permitting plans to be produced in their areas which may not realistically reflect the likely devastation caused by war. The resulting plans may therefore support the view that Civil Defence against nuclear attack is both possible and desirable.

Planning Assumptions Studies will at least provide a detailed and realistic assessment of the likely extent of hostile attack and devastation on a specific locality or region based on sound academic study and expert advice.

In addition to this Planning Assumptions Studies will provide a great deal of related information which can usefully be publicised.

The findings of a Planning Assumptions Study will be greatly enhanced both by more Local Authorities taking part in regional studies and by more regional studies being undertaken. Each individual Local Authority can therefore play an important part by participating in a study.

NFZ Local Authorities which are not currently involved in the studies are urged to become involved or, at least, to seek more information before making a positive decision not to become involved.

How can my authority become involved in a Planning Assumptions Study?

There are a variety of options available but in the first instance it would be advisable to contact Shaun Gregory at the address above.

It may be possible for your authority to participate in a Planning Assumptions Study which is already underway. Or it may be possible to joint with other authorities in areas of the country in which there is interest in Planning Assumptions Studies but presently insufficient numbers to proceed. Interest has already been expressed in the North East, Gloucester, Southampton, Crawley, and Leicestershire, amongst others.

Finally it may be possible to undertake new individual or joint Planning Assumptions Studies.

The National Steering Committee through the National Co-ordinator has produced a document known as the Planning Assumptions Study: The Basic Guide which provides all the information necessary to set up and conduct a Planning Assumptions Study. Advice is available on the legal basis for the study, the terms of reference and work programme for a study, establishing a member management committee to oversee the study, financing a study and so on. The National Co-ordinator is available to provide all the necessary support to get a study off the ground and to assist with technical oversight whilst studies are in progress. The National Co-ordinator will attend council meetings to discuss Planning Assumptions Studies and can assist in the selection of appropriate staff.