

**Information for the public on nuclear safety in the
European Community: Regulations and Practices**

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La Commission Européenne est active dans le domaine de l'information en radioprotection pour le public:

- par un instrument légal, contraignant pour les Etats Membres, c'est à dire la directive information en cas d'une urgence radiologique (89/618/EUR),
- par des actions de support, comme des vidéos, brochures, etc.

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This paper describes the work of the Commission of the European Communities in training and information in radiation protection.

The radiation protection has a long European pedigree.

In 1957 the Euratom Treaty established the European Atomic Energy Community, and one of the principal tasks attributed to the Community in the field of radiation protection was the preparation of uniform safety standards for protection of the population and of workers, and the monitoring of their application.

Training and information have remained and will continue to remain an integral component of the Standards. This Community precedent has led to radiation protection being taken as a model in other sectors.

Since 1975 the Commission has also organized conferences on training and information, attended by radiation protection specialists, and by representatives of the competent authorities and of the trade unions.

At the same time opinion polls on the risk perception by the population on the degree of satisfaction with information on radiation protection was performed in 1988 and 1989.

These consultations resulted in several support actions, such as the informative booklet "Radiation and You", videotapes, etc.

The Commission's action as regards public information is likewise based on the Euratom Treaty and on a legal instrument, responsibility for the matter having been conferred on the Commission by the Council Directive of 27 November 1989 on informing the general public about health protection measures to be applied and steps to be taken in the event of a radiological emergency (89/618/EUR). This directive seeks to define common objectives for informing the general public about health protection measures to be applied and steps to be taken in the event of a radiological emergency, and is partially based on the experience gained by the Commission with the so-called Seveso directive of 24 June 1982 on the major accident hazards of certain industrial activities (82/501/EEC). The deadline for implementing was 27 November 1991.

This public information obligation is specified in articles 5 and 6 of this Directive.

Article 5.1 reads,

Member States shall ensure that the population likely to be affected in the event of a radiological emergency is given information about the health-protection measures applicable to it and about the action it should take in the event of such an emergency.

The purpose of this provision is clearly not to define the geographical areas concerned, but to ensure that information is provided only if the authorities can assure the population that adequate measures have been planned. The population should be informed only if it is covered by an intervention plan.

Article 6 reads:

Member States shall ensure that, when a radiological emergency occurs, the population actually affected is informed without delay of the facts of the emergency, of the steps to be taken and, as appropriate to the case in point, and of the health-protection measures applicable to it.

In the event of a real radiological emergency, information must be provided systematically, rapidly and openly in order to encourage the population actually affected to adopt the appropriate behaviour. This cannot be achieved without obtaining the confidence of the population.

As laid down in Article 6(1), the information must be provided without delay, since lack of information and ignorance of the facts may produce anxiety and unforeseeable reactions on the part of the general public. The Member States can therefore, if appropriate, begin informing the population at the pre-alarm phase.

The most direct sources of information should be used (national, regional and local press and radio, television, direct answers by telephone and, if appropriate, computerized magazines such as teletexts).

Every step should be taken to ensure that sources of information are not giving contradictory information, e.g. by creating or appointing a national information dissemination agency with a coordinating function.

Overview of the implementation of the Directive 89/618/EURATOM.

Here we summarize, as an example, the situation in some E.C. countries:

Federal Republic of Germany

The legislation on planning for emergencies states that the Länder are responsible for establishing emergency plans. In 1975 (an updated version appeared in 1988) they negotiated with the Federal Government the "framework recommendations for contingency planning in the neighbourhood of nuclear installations", which set out the criteria to be met by emergency plans, as well as the warnings and information to be given to the public in the event of an accident.

Belgium:

The province governors are the competent authorities in the event of emergencies.

A national emergency plan which has been adopted on..... serves as a model for the various existing provincial emergency plans. Since the national emergency plan has been published, the population is able to familiarize itself with the broad outlines of the emergency plan. The national plan provides for both prior information and information in the event of an accident.

France:

Article 5 (prior information)

Information brochures have been distributed in the region of the 25 nuclear sites. The authorities think that this information campaign should be repeated every five years in view of the mobility of the population.

Since 6 May 1988 all the intervention plans specific to given installations are available for consultation at the relevant Prefectures and town halls. Information in schools in certain regions of France with nuclear installations can constitute an example of prior information, since the process must start with the very youngest children.

Article 6 (information in the event of an emergency)

By virtue of a decree adopted in mid-May 1990, the authorities can use the radio stations on the basis of agreements concluded with them.

A nuclear event scale has been adopted to facilitate relations with the media. It applied to power plants and has been extended to other fuel-cycle installations.

Ireland:

A non-regulatory, administrative emergency plan has been drawn up setting out the responsibilities of each ministry. This will be published and made available to the public.

In the event of an accident, an inter-ministerial expert committee would be convened to draw up communiqués to the Government on the question of information.

Portugal:

The Emergency plan is the responsibility of the National Service for Civil Protection. Public information is the responsibility of the Committee on Protection against ionizing Radiation and the regional health authorities.

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for information on transfrontier emergencies.

United Kingdom:

The Department of the Environment is responsible for emergency measures in the event of an accident outside British territory, while the Department of Energy is the responsible body in the event of an accident occurring on British territory.

Conclusions

From this brief overview it can be concluded that:

- in the majority of Member States specific regulations are being drafted governing information for the public on radiation protection; this should result in a better coordination between national and local authorities involved;
- the communication technology necessary for achieving the aims of the Directive has to be established or developed;
- a suitable terminology has to be developed to ensure both transparency of information and an understanding of the various levels of risk, without over-dramatizing the situation.

The initiatives already taken included such appropriate measures as agreements with the media, the establishment of a nuclear event scale and the publication of emergency plans.

Ref: Council Directive of 27 November 1989 on informing the general public about health protection measures to be applied and steps to be taken in the event of a radiological emergency (89/618/EUR).