

Response to Radiological Emergencies

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In January 1988, following review of the [Chernobyl accident](#), the Government published a National Response Plan to deal with the consequences for the United Kingdom (UK) of overseas nuclear accidents, the hub of which is a national radiation monitoring network and emergency response system known as [RIMNET](#) (Radioactive Incident Monitoring Network).

The National Response Plan

Arrangements set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Community Council of Ministers provide for the UK to receive early notification of overseas nuclear accidents involving a significant release of radioactivity. The UK also has bilateral early notification agreements with the Danish, Dutch, French, Norwegian and Russian governments. The RIMNET system, enables any increases in radiation levels within the UK, which arise from such an accident and are of radiological significance, to be detected. The system is designed to provide an automatic alert to such increases.

Following notification or detection of an overseas nuclear accident, an initial assessment of the possible consequences for the UK will be carried out. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions is the lead Government Minister in the event of any future nuclear accident abroad. Advice and briefing to him comes from the Ministerial Briefing Unit.

If assessment of the incident indicates that there will be no significant effect on the UK, information bulletins will be issued. However if it is possible that there will be significant effects on the UK, appropriate warning messages will be issued to

official bodies and the public, and National Response Plan [mechanisms](#) will be activated.

If an Incident state is declared a [Technical Co-ordination Centre \(TCC\)](#), staffed by representatives from Government departments and agencies with [specific responsibilities](#), will be set up along with the [Information Centre \(IC\)](#) and Ministerial Briefing Unit. Additional monitoring by Government departments and other approved bodies throughout the country will be initiated to allow the radiological effects of the incident on the UK to be established. The results of this monitoring will be assessed by experts in Government departments and other agencies; their assessments will be passed to the TCC to enable it to co-ordinate decision-making on any actions necessary to safeguard public health and other necessary interests.

Staff in the TCC will use all the information available to them to prepare regular information and advice for official bodies, the public and the media. This information will be disseminated by the Information Centre set up by DETR Information Directorate, and run alongside the TCC, for this purpose.

Information Dissemination

Information will be issued through press releases prepared by the IC on the basis of information provided by the TCC. Details of the accident, the effects on the United Kingdom and any advice that needs to be given to the public will be included.

In addition, arrangements have been negotiated with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Central Office of Information (COI) to issue bulletins via teletext and viewdata systems (CEEFAX and PRESTEL). This will provide a means providing information and advice direct to the public in their homes and workplaces. The bulletins will provide simple and concise information about the accident, pertaining to [ten bulletin regions](#) which cover the UK.

Regional bulletins will typically include information on:

- local radiation levels
- food and milk
- water
- meteorological forecasts
- commentary on specific local issues
- advice to the public and farmers

The number and frequency of bulletins will be consistent with the nature of accident. Information of a more detailed and technical nature is sent to local authorities and water suppliers to assist them in dealing with enquiries from the public.