



Sizewell Emergency Planning

This leaflet can be viewed at: <http://www.tasizewellc.org.uk/index.php/leaflets>
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It is acknowledged by the government that an accident at a nuclear power station could result in a significant release of radiation which would cause long lasting damage to health and the environment. In light of this, the Office of Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has a legal responsibility to ensure that a workable emergency plan is in place around all nuclear facilities. The terms of that plan are set out in The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, commonly referred to as REPPiR.¹

A central part of the emergency plan is to establish a detailed emergency planning zone (DEPZ) around the power station. At Sizewell, plans for the evacuation of people living within this zone have been drawn up and will be used if necessary in the event of a nuclear accident, and potassium iodate tablets have been distributed to people. The potassium iodate tablets fill up the thyroid gland with uncontaminated iodine and therefore prevent a build up of contaminated iodine 131 from the release (though unfortunately nothing can be done about the other dozens of radioactive products which might be present in such a release).

The size of the DEPZ is contentious. Having a radius of only 2.4km means it does not include Leiston. If the catchment area were extended to include the town, many more people would have to be notified about the emergency arrangements, and therefore many more concerns could be expressed from people who hitherto have not seen Sizewell nuclear power station as a threat.



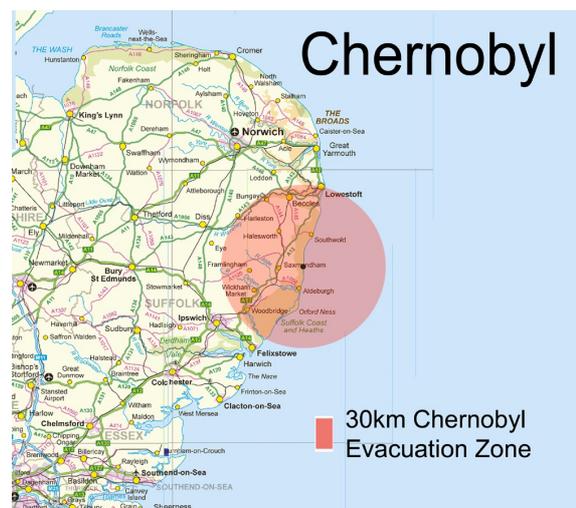
The red spot shows the current evacuation zone of 2.4km set around Sizewell

People living within the DEPZ have been given leaflets with instructions of what to do in the event of a radioactive leak. Suffolk County Council has the overall responsibility to co-ordinate the emergency plan, and a copy of it is held in the Council offices at Leiston for inspection by members of the public.

The diagrams below show the exclusion zones of Fukushima and Chernobyl mapped onto Sizewell



As of October 2012, the Fukushima nuclear plant may still be leaking radiation.²



Chernobyl - 26 Years on, an area of this size is still uninhabitable

1 The terms of the plan are set out in Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2975 The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 or REPPiR <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2001/2975/contents/made>.
2 <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn22426-radiation-still-high-in-fukushima-fish.html>

The Sizewell stakeholders group (SSG) has proposed 'up to' 20kms as a realistic DEPZ on the grounds that this is what was used in the immediate aftermath of Fukushima³ (the US instructed their nationals in Japan to observe an 80 km exclusion zone around the stricken plant) and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) have alluded to a 30 km DEPZ in various literature⁴. Dr John Large, a respected nuclear expert, has calculated that under the worst case conditions, several hundreds of thousands of people would be required to be evacuated in the East Anglian region in the event of an accident⁵.

Despite covering such a small area, there is a common belief that the current emergency plan around Sizewell is almost certainly unworkable, as it is around most nuclear plants.

The plan has to be tested at least once every 3 years in order to comply with the Radiation Regulations 2001 (REPPiR), however the authorities generally feel that the testing of the emergency plan should remain a desk based exercise rather than a real-life evacuation; they suggest that a full scale, real-time rehearsal would create more chaos, panic and distrust than it would reassurance.

People have expressed serious concerns over whether the emergency plan would be effective. For example, one requirement of REPPiR is that the emergency services identify personnel who are licensed to receive a dose of radiation above the level set for members of the public in order for them to be able to move around in the contaminated area. As far as we can tell, this has not been done. The current emergency plan advises people to stay indoors until the police contact them, but if the police are unable to access the area, this is impossible. A nuclear emergency exercise in Scotland was abandoned recently due to the fact that no personnel were identified as being authorised to receive the sort of dose they would be likely to receive in a real accident scenario⁶

It has been suggested that the information given to people living in the DEPZ is inadequate and is derived from sources which, in the main, wish to minimise the concerns. Coupled with this, the record to date of the nuclear industry in releasing accurate and timely information to the public about incidents is poor, with the extent of some incidents only becoming known many days or even months later. This has caused distrust amongst the public of information about incidents given by emergency planners at the time they occur. It is unlikely that in practice people would remain in their homes even if told to do so but would "self-evacuate" in panic, not believing any official reassurances given to them about the nature and risks of any incident and fearing that the risks from the incident were being understated.

In the wake of the accident at Fukushima, the office of nuclear regulation (ONR) recommended that an offsite emergency response centre be built in order to improve the response capability for Sizewell B. The public were invited to scrutinise the plans, and some people felt that that the proposals edf put forward were unrealistic. For example, a question was asked about how the centre would cope with members of the public who may congregate there in the event of an emergency. The answer came back that the public would not go to the emergency response centre in the event of an emergency because that was not what the centre was designed for.

We all hope that an unforeseen accident of the scale which caused such massive evacuation in Japan, or a malicious terrorist incident will not happen here. However, if our politicians and industrialists insist on building new nuclear plant in the midst of our communities, the least they can do is to ensure that the best emergency plans are laid to ensure, as best they can, our safety.

After Chernobyl and Fukushima the people evacuated face the reality of never returning:

It has been reported that the stress on family life for the two million people across Fukushima has been immense. So called "atomic divorce" is widespread as people are living with constant low-level anxiety and don't have the emotional strength to mend their relationships when cracks appear. Couples are being torn apart over such issues as whether to stay in the area or leave, what to believe about the dangers of radiation, whether it is safe to get pregnant and the best methods to protect children. Cases of suicide, depression, alcoholism, gambling and domestic violence are increasing, and discrimination against people from Fukushima is growing. Negative comments in the media and on websites insinuate that Fukushima women are "damaged goods", and that people from Fukushima should not marry because the deformity rate of their babies will skyrocket.⁷

3 Sizewell-A-and-B-Stakeholder-Group_ SSG_Minutes-of-the-sub-group-meeting-10-October2012.pdf

4 L.7.1-3 Emergency preparedness and response (ANL DEC2010)-dng.pdf (from the table on page 28)

5 Dr. John Large (www.largeassociates.com) modelled the effects of potential accidents at sizewell using industry models

6 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/22/barrow-dockyard-nuclear-exercise>

7 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/feb/24/divorce-after-fukushima-nuclear-disaster>