



### Would evacuation be advisable?

No - evacuation would not be recommended for a nuclear accident in the UK, irrespective of rainfall and wind direction. Wylfa in North Wales, the nearest UK nuclear plant to Ireland, is 110 km from the Irish coastline. The IAEA guidance recommends that pre planning for precautionary evacuation is unlikely to be justified at distances greater than 30 km from a nuclear facility.

Evacuation would be more likely to expose people to a greater radioactive dose as they would be caught outdoors or in vehicles which offer less protection and have no facilities compared with remaining indoors.

### How long will people be required to stay indoors?

Depending on the nature of the accident and the weather, people may be advised to stay indoors for some hours. This would help reduce exposure and long term cancer risk. Staying off the road will help essential services personnel or others who may need to travel.

### Further information

Questions or comments relating to the contents of this information leaflet should be directed to:

Nuclear Safety Section  
Department of the Environment Heritage & Local  
Government  
Custom House  
Dublin 1

LoCall: 1890 44 33 22  
[www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

or

Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland  
3 Clonskeagh Square  
Clonskeagh Road  
Dublin 14

[www.rpii.ie](http://www.rpii.ie)

# SAFEGUARDING IRELAND FROM NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS

Information Leaflet  
on the  
National Emergency Plan  
for Nuclear Accidents



## SAFEGUARDING IRELAND FROM NUCLEAR ACCIDENTS

*The National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents (NEPNA) provides the framework for co-ordinating the emergency response to the accidental or deliberate release of radioactivity that could create radioactive contamination in Ireland.*

Radiological incidents abroad that could affect Ireland include:

- an accident at a nuclear plant
- a terrorist attack on a nuclear plant
- a nuclear explosion in another country

Incidents in Ireland that could affect the environment include:

- local dispersal of radioactive substances by spillages, fires, dumpings, etc
- incidents involving nuclear-powered ships close to the coast
- incidents involving ships carrying radioactive materials

NEPNA is one of a number of complementary national and local authority plans catering for different emergency situations. The Plan uses the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and international experience from organisations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the European Commission. It ensures that the State resources are used effectively and that the response arrangements are fully coordinated.

The lead responsibility for co-ordinating the emergency responses among Government Departments and Agencies lies with the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. In an emergency, the Department would chair a committee which would consider the expert advice from the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland regarding measures to protect the population.

## How is Ireland notified about nuclear incidents abroad?

Rapid notification of radiological incidents with potential crossborder implications is provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (in Vienna) and the European Commission (in Luxembourg).

In addition, the RPII has access to:

- RIMNET - the UK radiation monitoring network, supplying data on an hourly basis from 94 stations.
- EURDEP - the EU radiological data exchange platform which provides relevant information from most European countries and would be continuously updated during an emergency.

Through a 24-hour a day connection to the Garda national contact point, Gardaí can activate the emergency response plan by notifying key staff in the relevant Government Departments and public authorities.

Ireland also has a separate Bilateral Agreement with the UK to receive immediate notification of any nuclear incident.

## How soon after notification would Ireland be affected?

This would depend on such factors as:

- distance from Ireland of the nuclear plant involved
- weather conditions such as wind direction In the case of an accident at a UK nuclear plant, a warning period of some hours would be expected.

## Could Ireland be seriously contaminated by an incident abroad?

The greatest risk to health in Ireland would be through a possible increased risk of cancer in the longer term. However this risk can be greatly reduced by following Government advice on

protective measures such as restrictions on certain foodstuffs and staying indoors for some time.

Agriculture and tourism would be among the sectors of the Irish economy that would suffer most from nuclear contamination.

## How is radioactive contamination detected in Ireland?

With support from Met Éireann, local authorities and the Department of Defence, the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII) operates a national network of permanent monitoring stations which continuously check the level of background radiation across the country.

If the network detects elevated radiation levels, it automatically alerts the RPII's duty officer to assess the situation.

## How would weather affect the contamination level?

Wind direction and rainfall are critical factors. Ireland's prevailing westerly winds mean the chances of significant contamination reaching here would be considerably lower than if the winds were easterly. In an emergency, the RPII would use the latest Met Éireann forecast data to predict which areas might become contaminated.

## How will the public be informed in an emergency?

Radio and television media will be used to regularly update the public with information on an emergency. The public will be encouraged to strictly follow the advice given and to;

**GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN**



RPII monitoring Station

## How will the public be protected?

There are simple measures which can be taken to limit the risk to the Irish public such as:

- Restrictions on the consumption of certain foodstuffs. This would remove the most significant dose risk.
- Short term measures such as staying indoors.
- Possible use of stable iodine tablets. Iodine tablets were issued to households nationwide by the Department of Health and Children (see [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie) for details) and tablets are also available from the Health Service Executive. However, not all nuclear accidents release radioactive iodine – an accident at Sellafield, for instance, would be a prime example – so iodine tablets would not be required in such cases.

See Department of Health and Children press release of 3 April 2008 to discontinue distribution of iodine tablets <http://www.dohc.ie/press/releases/2008/20080403c.html>