

## PREPARING FOR NUCLEAR DISASTER:

For those of us who grew up after World War II, the prospect of nuclear annihilation was an indelible part of our lives. Before the Berlin Wall fell, and the Soviet Union imploded we all feared mutually assured destruction, and from the 1950's until some 40 years later, the threat of nuclear war loomed large, inspiring nightmares among children and adults alike. I remember the fear I felt as I sat at my school desk during the Cuban Missile Crisis and I and my classmates practiced ducking under our desks and covering our heads with our arms to protect us from flying glass. There was a fallout shelter in my junior-high basement, and another on the campus of the University of Utah. Now the arms race is going the other direction and tensions have cooled, but in the labs at Los Alamos, the worry has switched from tracking Soviet missile silos to tracking smuggled plutonium sought by terrorists.

According to FEMA, while we may no longer have to fear thousands of nuclear warheads raining down on our centers of population and industry, a terrorist use of a radiological dispersion device (RDD)- often called “dirty nuke” or dirty bomb”- is considered far more likely than use of a nuclear device. These radiological weapons are a combination of conventional explosives and radioactive material designed to scatter dangerous and sub-lethal amounts of radioactive material over a general area. Such radiological weapons appeal to terrorists because they require very little technical knowledge to build and deploy compared to that of a nuclear device. Also, these radioactive materials, used widely in medicine, agriculture, industry and research, are much more readily available and easy to obtain compared to weapons grade uranium or plutonium.



Nuclear delivery systems

Terrorist use of a nuclear device would probably be limited to a single smaller “suitcase” weapon. The strength of such a weapon would be in the range of the bombs used during World War II. The nature of the effects would be the same as a weapon delivered by an inter-continental missile, but the area and severity of the effects would be significantly more limited.

If there were threat of nuclear attack from a hostile nation, people living near potential targets could be advised to evacuate or they could decide on their own to evacuate to an area not considered a likely target. Protection from radioactive fallout would require taking shelter in an underground area, or in the middle of a large building.

For those Federal Heights residents who want to be prepared for a nuclear disaster, here is a list of websites that can give you the information you need:

<http://www.ki4u.com/guide.htm>

<http://www.disasterhelp.gov/radiation.shtm>

<http://www.lrc.fema.gov/pathnuclear.html>