

Plans for aftermath of atomic war 'inadequate'

By FRANCES HORSBURGH
Local Government Correspondent

GOVERNMENT guidance for civil defence planners in Scotland came under fire yesterday for being inadequate, ambiguous, and vague, with the publication of two major studies into the assumptions on which local authorities would base preparations to help people face nuclear war.

The reports, covering Strathclyde and East Central Scotland, conclude that, depending on such factors as the prevailing winds, up to 65% of people living in Scotland could be killed or injured in a nuclear attack.

Councillor Will Herald, Labour chairman of the local government committee which commissioned the East Central Scotland study from researchers at Edinburgh University, told a news conference in Edinburgh that he was deeply concerned at the lack of information available to local authorities.

"The Government has placed a legal duty on councils to plan for a nuclear emergency and to protect the surviving population, but won't even tell us what the likely targets will be, what the military or police response will be, or even what advice they'll be giving out to the public," he said.

Councillor Herald, of Lothian region, said recent political developments could make a nuclear

attack less likely, but he stressed that, as long as governments kept stocks of nuclear weapons, the possibility of an attack existed.

Mr Alan Walker, of the Department of Physics at Edinburgh University, who co-ordinated the East Central Scotland study, agreed that such a scenario seemed less and less likely, but said this did not alter the obligation of local authorities to draw up realistic plans.

He had concluded that the Scottish Office did not have the expertise or manpower to be able to give councils the kind of answers on which they could base their planning assumptions.

Particular concern is expressed in the studies about the conflicting nature of Government advice over evacuation, and the fact that no national guidance has been forthcoming. The Government is known to favour a stay-put policy, but allow councils to plan for evacuation or self-evacuation, if they see a need to do so.

In addition, the studies highlight the apparent absence of plans for making foodstocks available to local authorities for emergency feeding, and for the environmental health problems of disease and disposal of the dead.

Councillor Herald said: "Govern-

ment advice is that we should make our plans 'flexible' to cope with either a civil emergency, such as a train crash, or a nuclear attack. This is sheer absurdity, especially since no extra resources are being made available."

He also declared that, as the private sector was being encouraged to play a greater role in the provision of services, councils might not have access to the staff and equipment needed for even a basic response to a nuclear emergency.

A Scottish Office spokesman denied that information was being withheld. A national base of realistic planning assumptions was available to local authorities in emergency planning guidelines issued in 1985, which were kept up to date in the light of international developments. Strathclyde's study was undertaken by regional officials working with the regional emergency planning unit.

Copies of the booklet, Civil Defence Planning Assumptions in Central Scotland, combining information from the two studies will be available from libraries and offices of Strathclyde Regional Council and the 14 other local authorities involved in the East Central Scotland Study which include Central, Fife, Lothian, and Tayside regions.

New Zealand to test defences

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
TUESDAY

JANUARY 17, 1989

New Zealand's biggest military exercise in 20 years began yesterday with the United States a noticeable absentee because of New Zealand's refusal to allow visits by nuclear-capable ships.

At its peak the month-long Golden Fleece exercise will involve nearly 8,000 New Zealand personnel joined by about 500 soldiers from Britain, Australia, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Tonga. — AP