



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department

## **Radiological Response**

**Casualty Management After a Deliberate Release of Radioactive Material**

# **Casualty Management After a Deliberate Release of Radioactive Material**

This document contains recommended immediate actions for policemen, firefighters, and EMTs who may be faced with a nuclear terrorist attack.

### **The Situation**

A conventional explosion has scattered radioactive material, a truck carrying radioactive material has exploded, or an aerosol containing radioactive material has been spread over a large area. There may be some injured people as well as hundreds of contaminated or exposed people.

### **How to Protect Yourself**

- **Approach the release site with caution.**

Position personnel, vehicles, and command post at a safe distance upwind and uphill of the site, if possible.

Ensure your own physical safety. Look for fires, exposed high voltage wires, sharp or falling objects, tripping hazards, or hazardous chemicals. Be alert for changing conditions.



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- **Wear a mask.**

This will reduce the dose from inhalation of radioactive dust. Ideally the mask should be a full-face mask with a HEPA filter, but even breathing through a wet handkerchief or cloth will help. There will be little danger from radioactive gases, so a self-contained breathing mask, while effective, is not necessary unless there are other gases or toxins present.

- **Remove clothes once you leave the area.**

Bag the clothing for later disposal. If you fail to remove your clothing you will continue to receive radiation and expose others because dust collects on your clothes. Wear loose fitting clothes covering as much of your body as possible. Any removable garment that will prevent the dust from coming in to direct contact with your skin will be good.

- **Protect open wounds or abrasions from radioactive contamination.**

- **Rinse your entire body off.**

If running water or showers area available, rinse your entire body with lukewarm water. Even a fire hose may remove most contamination not already removed with the outer clothing.



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- **Do not eat, drink, or smoke while exposed to potentially radioactive dust or smoke.**

Drinking water may be necessary for people working in high temperatures with bulky protective clothing. If absolutely necessary to drink water, drink from a canteen or other closed container. Beware of heat strain.

- **Place radiation measuring instruments in plastic bags to prevent their contamination.**

If radiation tools are available, place them in plastic bags to prevent their contamination and use them to map the areas of highest dose rates. Do not enter the areas of highest dose rate except to save lives, and then make the entry as brief as possible.

#### **How to Protect the Injured and Exposed**

- ✓ Seriously injured people should be removed from the source of radiation, stabilized, and sent to hospitals first.
- ✓ After treatment of serious physical injuries, preventing the spread of the radioactive material or unnecessary exposure of other people is important.



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- Establish an exclusion zone around the source. Mark the area with ropes or tapes. Reroute traffic. Limit entry to rescue personnel only. Detain uninjured people who are inside the control zone until they can be checked for radioactive contamination, but do not delay treatment of injured people to transport to a hospital for this purpose.
- Take action to limit or stop the release of more radioactive material, if possible, but delay cleanup attempts until radiation protection technicians are on scene.
- Tell nearby hospitals to expect the arrival of radioactively contaminated and injured people.
- ✓ Everyone near the scene should be checked for radioactive contamination. As soon as you obtain radiation-measuring equipment, establish a decontamination area for this purpose. Decontaminate people whose injuries are not life-threatening (broken arms, etc.) before sending them to hospitals. Do not send people without physical injuries to hospitals.
- ✓ Record keeping is as important for the long-term health of the victims as it is for the emergency responders.



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### **For More Help**

In the event of a radiation emergency, you should notify your state Radiation Control Program Director. Telephone numbers for each state may be found at

<http://www.crcpd.org/Map/map.asp>

### **For Questions Regarding Radiological Information**

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