

What to do in a radiation emergency

A guide for residents

www.portsmouth.gov.uk

This booklet is important.

Make sure you keep it in a safe place and ensure you pass it on to any new resident should you move on.

July 2024 - July 2027

This booklet has been produced by Portsmouth City Council, Gosport Borough Council and Hampshire County Council in consultation with NHS and the Royal Navy and the Ministry of Defence.



Ministry
of Defence



GOSPORT
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

As one of Britain's leading naval bases, nuclear-powered vessels will occasionally visit Portsmouth.

This booklet provides essential information that you'll need in the highly unlikely event of a leak of radioactive material from a vessel. It is being distributed to all households within a 1.5-kilometre radius of the nuclear berths in accordance with emergency regulations.

The drill in an emergency is simple:

Go in – Stay in – Tune in

Follow instructions you are given.

Although the chance of ever having to use this booklet in an emergency is very slight, please put it in a safe place where you can find it easily.

For more information on radiation safety, call the Emergency Preparedness, Resilience & Response Team at Portsmouth City Council on **023 9284 1357*** or by emailing **emergency.planning@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**.

This written information is available on request in other formats or languages. Please contact **023 9284 1357*** or by emailing **emergency.planning@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**.

* Please note, this number is for non-emergency queries only. In the event of an emergency please check local news and/or social media for emergency helpline numbers.

What is a radiation emergency?

The design of a nuclear-powered vessel means that an incident involving a vessel's reactor is extremely unlikely. However, if the reactor on board a vessel suffers a serious problem and begins to leak, radioactive particles might escape into the air. There is no possibility of a "nuclear bomb" type explosion.

Who will be affected?

If an incident occurred, it is unlikely this would affect people more than half a kilometre (500 yards) from the vessel, and because of the size of the naval base this would probably only affect people within the base.

Legislation requires people living up to 1.5km away from an operational berth to be given prior information about a nuclear emergency as provided in this booklet. The map on page 5 shows 1.5km distance.

What could happen in a radiation emergency?

Usually, all radioactive material would be contained in the submarine or ship. In some extreme circumstances it is possible that some of this radioactive material could escape and affect areas close to the vessel or downwind of it.

In such an emergency, people in the naval base who were very close to the vessel could be exposed to gamma radiation, which is very similar to x-rays.

The main risk to the public would be if very tiny radioactive particles were released into the air. They might be carried by the wind and could settle on people or objects that people were in contact with. These tiny particles are unstable and give off radiation.

You could be exposed to radioactive particles by:

- Inhaling contaminated air or gases
- Having contact with contaminated surfaces
- Eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- Direct exposure from particles as they are blown along in a 'plume'

Will this affect food and drink?

It is unlikely that tap water, food or drink in your house that is covered or sealed, will be affected. You should wait for advice before eating anything stored outside or growing in an allotment or garden. More advice and information on this will be given out in the event of a radiation emergency.

What can radiation do and how do I stay safe?

Radiation is a form of energy we are exposed to all the time, from natural and man-made sources. In some forms it can be harmful to humans and other living things because it can harm cells. This can result in damage to organs or other long-term effects.

In this type of incident, the main concern for the public would be exposure to radioactive iodate particles.

Your body can absorb a limited amount of iodates so you can easily stay safe by using stable iodine tablets (SITs), these contain safe iodates and minimise the health risks by preventing the body absorbing certain material.

The main way to stay safe is to stay inside with your windows and doors shut, then none of the radioactive particles can reach you. More instructions on what to do are on the following pages.

What are Stable Iodine Tablets?

The use of these tablets has been advised by the National Health Service (NHS). They will protect your health if used as directed. You may

be advised not to take the tablets immediately. If so, tune in to your local radio station or television where further information will be available.

Dosage:

- Adults (including pregnant women and women who are breastfeeding) – Two tablets
- Children aged three to twelve years – One tablet
- Children aged one month to three years – Half of a tablet
- Birth to one month – Quarter of a tablet crushed up in a teaspoon of jam, honey or yoghurt or dissolved in a small quantity of milk formula or juice (ignore any traces of undissolved tablet)

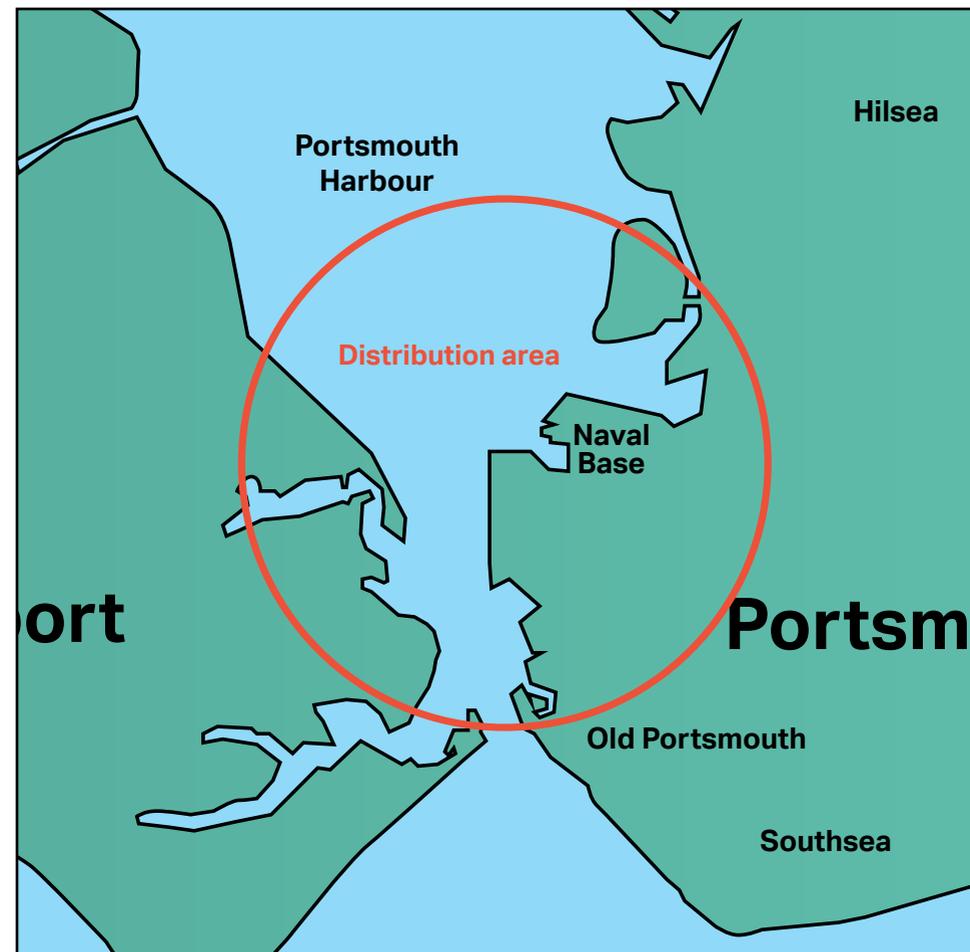
If you are allergic to iodine or any of the other ingredients in the tablets or suffer from the very rare conditions of hypocomplementaemic vasculitis or dermatitis herpetiformis, please consult your doctor before taking the SITs.

If you have any queries about taking the tablets, contact NHS Helpline on 111.

How will I know about an emergency?

You will know if there is a radiation emergency because the police will tell you, or you will hear or see a

news announcement. The naval base siren will also be used – a rising and falling wailing note. This siren is tested at 9:30am on the last Wednesdays of February, June and October.



We show the area as a circle to make it easier to understand. The actual zone goes out to the nearest natural or landscape boundary. In this guide 'Portsmouth naval base' means the areas at HMS Nelson owned by the MOD and His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Portsmouth

What to do if you live within 1.5km of the detailed zone

GO IN

- In the highly unlikely event of a nuclear incident the best thing to do is to go indoors and stay there. Don't go outside unless you are told to. Make sure you keep your pets indoors as well. If you have an elderly neighbour, you may want to tell them that there is an emergency.
- Close windows and doors.
- Shut down fans, fires and ventilators. In fact, anything that draws in air from outside.

STAY IN

- Don't go outside where radiation could be higher, unless you're told to. You will be much safer indoors. If you need to leave the area you will be told, and you should follow the instructions given. If you try to leave earlier you may block the roads for emergency services
- Keep pets indoors to stop them bringing possible contamination into the house.
- If your children are at school, the school will look after them – going to collect your children may expose you and them to radiation.

TUNE IN

- TV: BBC 1, BBC 2, ITV Meridian
- Radio: BBC Radio Solent (96.1 & 103.8 FM)
- Hits Radio South Coast (107.8 FM)
- Heart FM (96.7 FM)
- Greatest Hits Radio (South Coast) (105.2 FM)
- Capital FM (103.2 FM)
- Social Media:
✕ @PortsmouthToday  /PortsmouthCityCouncil

- Don't use the telephone unless you urgently need help. In an emergency the telephone system could become very busy. If you have to make a call, please keep it short.

STABLE IODINE TABLETS

– how to get them and when to take them

- Listen to information about "SITs" – stable iodine tablets and how they will be distributed to you.
- Most residential properties will receive SITs from Royal Navy personnel or council staff distributed to your door. If you are out when they call, SITs will be left with a leaflet telling you what to do.
- Only take SITs when told to do so – these arrangements will be confirmed by radio, TV announcement and on Social Media.
- Should you require further assistance, a telephone helpline number will be released in the event of an emergency.

STAY TUNED

- Listen out for further announcements and information.
- During an emergency, up-to-date information will be published on the Portsmouth City Council website and social media channels. Information and advice will also be on local radio, TV and websites.

What happens to schools?

The following schools and nurseries in your area could be affected:

- St George's Primary School
- Portsmouth Grammar School
- Top Tots Day Nursery in the John Pounds Centre

They have stable iodine tablets for all children and staff in their care. In the event of an incident, the school will look after the children. Going to collect your child may expose you and them to radiation. When it is safe for children to leave the building, the school will contact you.

Schools more than 1.5km from the naval base will be told about any incidents by the council and will look after any pupils whose parents live within the 1.5km zone and who may not be able to collect them.

Keep checking sources of information for any further details on what to do.

What do I do when the immediate danger has passed?

You should keep listening and looking for announcements and updates on the news.



If you hear an emergency announcement

Go in – shut the windows and doors
– shut down fans, fires and ventilators.

Stay in – and await distribution of tablets by the Royal Navy or council staff.

Tune in – to local radio, TV or social media for information on when to take your tablets.

Don't use the phone unless you need urgent help.

Wait for the all clear announcement.

Watch for long-term safety information in the news and in leaflets.

A telephone helpline number will be released in the event of an emergency.

Broadcast Information

Information will be broadcast on:

TV: BBC1, BBC2, ITV Meridian

Radio: BBC Radio Solent (96.1 & 103.8 FM)

Heart FM (97.5 FM)

Wave FM (105.2 FM)

Greatest Hits Radio (South Coast) (105.2 FM)

Hits Radio South Coast (107.4 FM)

Express FM (93.7 FM)

Social media channels:

 Portsmouthcitycouncil

 portsmouthtoday

If you would like more information please contact:

Emergency Preparedness, Resilience & Response Team

Portsmouth City Council

Civic Offices

Guildhall Square

Portsmouth

PO1 2AL

Telephone: 023 9284 1357

You can get this Portsmouth City Council information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 023 9284 1357