April 7, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions about a Nuclear Incident in Ukraine and Public Health in the United States

With the Russia/Ukraine conflict continuing to threaten the security of nuclear power plants and with rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons in the region, the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements (NCRP) wants to reassure the American public that a nuclear release in Ukraine presents no short-term or long-term health threats anywhere in the United States, including Alaska, Hawaii and the U.S. territories.

Would there be a health threat in the United States or its territories from a nuclear power plant release or nuclear weapon detonation in Ukraine?

No. If a nuclear release were to happen in Ukraine, there would be no need to take safety precautions if you are in the United States or its territories. The radiation experts at NCRP and scientists from around the world have spent decades studying the effects of large radioactive releases on populations across the world. Harmful levels of radiation cannot travel the approximately 4,000 miles from Ukraine to the nearest United States shore.

Will we be able to detect radiation from a release in Eastern Europe in the United States?

Yes. Based on historical incidents, radiation detection instruments are so sensitive they will be able to detect radiation from a foreign incident in the United States, but we also know the levels will be too small to be dangerous.

For more information on radiation monitoring, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) RadNet system tracks radiation levels at sites across the nation and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has the International Monitoring System

Will imported food and goods from Europe be safe?

Yes. There are screening protocols in place to monitor goods coming into the country for radioactive contamination. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for protecting public health by assuring the safety of our nation's food supply. FDA's Response to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Facility Incident page contains information on the Agency's food safety programs.

Where can I learn more about effects of historical radiation releases on the United States and emergency response plans?

EPA's History of RadNet timeline provides information on radiation monitoring in the United States after foreign nuclear incidents like Chernobyl and Fukushima. FEMA also has radiological emergency preparedness resources for emergency managers and radiation emergency guidance for the public.

To help the nation's radiation and emergency management communities prepare and respond to releases of radioactive material, NCRP provides scientific, consensus guidance documents on radiation safety and emergency response, including:

- *NCRP Report No. 180, Radiation Protection Guidance for The United States (2018)*, which provides specific guidance for exposure of Emergency Workers;
- *NCRP Report No. 179, Guidance for Emergency Response Dosimetry*, which includes a section of anticipated public and worker questions and answers; and
- *NCRP Report No. 165, Responding to a Radiological or Nuclear Terrorism Incident: A Guide for Decision Makers*, which is free to download.

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