



Home Office

**Office for Security and
Counter-Terrorism**
2 Marsham Street, London
SW1P 4DF
OSCTFOI@homeoffice.x.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7035 4848
Fax: 020 7035 4745
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

request-342543-bcd20b28@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Ref: 40212
Date: 20/07 2016

Dear Mr Salter,

Thank you for your email 28 June 2016 in which you asked about historic materials which informed British citizens on how to protect themselves during a nuclear attack, and whether a modern equivalent exists in relation to nuclear, biological or chemical weapons attacks. You specifically asked:

“During the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the Home Office prepared the Protect and Survive pamphlet and a series of accompanying Public Information Films to inform British citizens on how to protect themselves during a nuclear attack.

In the event that a nuclear strike was imminent, would the original materials produced in that era be broadcast and distributed to the population, or does a modern equivalent exist that would be used instead?

Also, do similar materials exist that provide information on how to protect yourself in the event of a biological or chemical weapons attack?”

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The National Security Strategy identifies a CBRN attack (an attack using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons) as a tier two priority risk, based on a judgement of the combination of both likelihood and impact. Under the Government’s counter-terrorism strategy CONTEST, the Home Office works with the Security and Intelligence Services to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. As part of this counter-terrorism effort the Home Office also considers the highest impact terrorist risks, including the risk of a terrorist attack which makes use of unconventional weapons. While the likelihood of terrorists undertaking an effective, mass-casualty, nuclear, chemical, or biological attack remains low, it cannot be ruled out completely.

We do not hold the original historic 1970’s and 1980’s material. You may wish to search via The National Archives website- www.nationalarchives.gov.uk or write to The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or call 02088763444.

The historic materials have been superseded by an updated communications strategy that recognises the balance between providing generic pre-event messaging in relation to a low-likelihood event versus tailored communications in response to a specific event. UK Government has, for example, published advice in relation to a nuclear emergency advising the public to shelter and wait for advice from the emergency services (more information can be found at the following link

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467198/Nuclear_emergencies_-_information_for_the_public_October_2015.pdf). In the unlikely event of a chemical or biological emergency the UK Government advice is to follow instruction from first responders and government endorsed medical practitioners.

The fundamentals of the types of actions individuals can take to protect themselves from nuclear chemical, or biological hazards have not changed since the 1970's and 80's, but technology and communications developments have opened a wide range of very powerful tools to disseminate information rapidly from broadcast through to the internet, SMS text messaging and social media. Research has shown that simple and effective communication with victims of a nuclear, chemical, or biological emergency is vital to a successful response.

As part of the updated UK Government communications strategy, trained emergency service responders are briefed on the most effective messages to disseminate to the public in the event of a chemical, biological or nuclear incident. In most instances specific and detailed communication plans would be developed to meet the precise circumstances of the emergency and would make full use of contemporary dissemination tools to provide advice on actions which should be taken, prioritising information on life-saving actions that the public can take to protect themselves. On-going communications would be informed by scientists and potentially in some cases delivered by scientists during a chemical, biological or nuclear emergency.

If you are dissatisfied with the response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to the address below, quoting reference **40212**. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

Information Rights Team
Home Office
4th Floor, Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
E-mail: FOIRequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Yours sincerely

FOI Team