

The Nuclear War Survival Skills Plan for Arizona

Stephen Jones

Air-raid drills in elementary school were very scary, as were films we were shown, such as *The Day Called X*.¹ I read *On the Beach* and *Level 7*, not realizing that they were pure science fiction. Even though I became a nuclear arms technician in the U.S. Navy, it was not until I read *Nuclear War Survival Skills*² in 1980 that I learned that nuclear war would not be the end.

It never made sense to me that the United States had no civil defense whatsoever. What if the worst happens? Somehow we are culturally programmed not to talk about or even think about that. Emergency managers and first responders, on the other hand, have a professional responsibility to think about that as well as plan for it.

Lacking resources and even community support today, emergency managers are faced with the dilemma of doing nothing regarding “the worst,” or resorting to expedient solutions. The U.S. Department of Energy has given us a manual called *Nuclear War Survival Skills*, outlining no-cost and low-cost solutions to the nuclear dilemma. It alone can instruct an emergency manager in how to protect his jurisdiction, including how to make a simple but accurate radiation meter.

Wayne LeBaron, who is probably the oldest living civil defense expert, has put it bluntly: Urban America will not survive a nuclear war, but rural America will. LeBaron has championed simple civil defense measures like those in *Nuclear War Survival Skills* that he believes will save many lives in rural America but will be mostly useless in larger cities. One measure is the concept of shelter in place.

The Tucson-based organization Physicians for Civil Defense asked the question: How can a small organization with almost no funds reduce casualties and improve chances of community survival for an entire state if the worst happens? The answer was simple: Provide the state’s emergency managers with tools they need to protect and direct their jurisdictions if there is a nuclear attack. Only those jurisdictions outside of Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma would be eligible for these tools—or even willing to receive them.

The group created a small but simple Nuclear Attack Kit containing the *Nuclear War Survival Skills* manual, two radiation detectors, and some self-training material. The retail value of the kits was about \$400 each. A team of volunteers was sent to every fire district in the state outside of Tucson, Phoenix, and Yuma. Most of the firemen receiving the kits got on-the-spot training on how to use the *Nuclear War Survival Skills* manual and operate the two radiation detectors—a factory-made Kearny Fallout Meter and a NukAlert.³ (See Figures 1 and 2.) The Kearny Fallout Meter can be made using the field-tested instructions in the manual, from materials found in most homes. The function of the Kearny Fallout Meter was demonstrated using a cheap radiation source made from old smoke detectors.

The response of many firemen to the kits was relief and gratitude. There was also the “Aha!” reaction by some fire chiefs, who finally

understood the whole picture after just briefly reviewing some of the first few pages of the manual. Hazardous materials (hazmat) personnel were equally quick to grasp the concepts of high-level radiation monitoring even though they had only been trained in low-level monitoring. Radiation doses resulting from a nuclear detonation would be far higher than from a hazmat incident.

By distributing the kits statewide, Physicians for Civil Defense not only has given emergency managers essential tools they did not have, but has created a radiation monitoring net for the entire state. If there is nuclear fallout, its footprint can be accurately measured, since virtually every jurisdiction now has instruments.

One previously unappreciated aspect of radiation monitoring is the usefulness of “negative” monitoring. The detectors are not needed just to show that there *is* radiation danger, but rather that *there is none*. The public wrongly believes that all radiation is dangerous, and any amount can kill you. They do not understand that we are constantly exposed to background radiation, and that most nuclear fallout is not a threat after just a few days.

The last printed page in the *Nuclear War Survival Skills* manual, the “2001 Addendum on Radiation Hormesis,” debunks the scaremongering to which Americans have been subjected for decades. It makes it plain that the main danger from a nuclear attack is panic, not the effects of the bombs. Panic will prevent essential workers from going to work, and that will do far more damage than bombs.

Arizona is now the only state whose community emergency managers are properly equipped for the worst. It’s unfortunate that Tucson, Phoenix, and Yuma are unable to participate, but it is not the fault of their emergency managers. The blame lies on a public and its



Figure 1. Fire Captain Wade Allen Charges a Kearny Fallout Meter.

government that are entirely unwilling to take any measures to protect the community against the worst. If the worst happens, a new Phoenix will be reborn—not from the old one, but rather from the small rural cities and towns that surround it.

To better ensure Arizona's survival if the worst happens, Physicians for Civil Defense is also striving to equip the rest of America's small cities and towns with Nuclear Attack Kits. The entire project will cost about \$8 million, but the money only needs to be raised in small increments as each state is outfitted.

Many have asserted that preparing for a nuclear attack invites it, but the opposite is true, as the late Edward Teller explains in the *Nuclear War Survival Skills* manual. Throughout 6,000 years of recorded history, there is no example of a nation that survived by making itself vulnerable to attack. Some of the earliest Greek writings describe how countries were selected to be conquered. Those that were given to a lot of festivals and holidays were considered easy prey. The fundamental elements of warfare have not changed much in 6,000 years, nor have the people who fight them.

The feature of the Physicians for Civil Defense plan that detracts most from its credibility is that it is so inexpensive. It cost billions to create a statewide radiation monitoring net during the Cold War. It was bureaucratic, using instruments that required biannual calibration and maintenance. Much like the joke about how many [insert group] does it take to screw in a light bulb, it took three people just to take a reading from a meter. There was the meter reader, then the interpreter of the reading, and finally the person who made a decision based on the reading. Behind all this was another layer of bureaucracy since the meter reader, the interpreter, and the decisionmaker had to be trained and retrained annually. This was necessary because the system was based entirely on memorization, and was easy to forget. In contrast, both the NukAlert and the Kearny Fallout Meter are self-training and require no calibration. The Kearny Fallout Meter works on the same principle as the Indian Weather Stone. It requires no memorization but is instantly understandable by anyone who understands how the Indian Weather Stone works (see Figure 3).

The Indian Weather Stone is a rock suspended on a leather strip from a small tripod. If the rock is wet, it is raining. If the rock is white, it is snowing. And if the rock is moving, the wind is blowing. This

sounds like a joke, but so does the Kearny Fallout Meter because it is equally simple. Both work on the same principle. If the charged aluminum foil leaves of the Kearny Fallout Meter are coming together, there is radiation. If they are not coming together (i.e. they are maintaining their charge) there is no radiation. The simplicity and small expense give the impression that the meter can't be any good and that its advocates are crazy.

The tragedy of our lack of a real national defense is reflected in Phoenix and Tucson, where the over-reliance on high-tech gadgetry and "elite" teams of specialists has rendered city emergency managers and first responders themselves uninformed about how to respond to the worst—except that they can say that their department has good instruments.

The amount of training the average first responder needs to prepare for the worst consists of reading the first 35 pages and the last page of *Nuclear War Survival Skills*. Certainly more would be better, but that small amount of information would keep many first responders alive and functional, even if they read it just once.

The message we tried to convey is simply: "It works. You can do it."

Let us hope that political and economic solutions are able to settle world conflicts and that we never see a new Phoenix, the third Arizona. Just in case, let's be prepared, not just in Arizona but in all the states that surround it.

To see how we did it—and will be continuing to do it, view our slide shows and videos at www.youtube.com/user/Roadman911.

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- ³ *NukAlert Operating Manual*. Available at: www.nukalert.com. Accessed Feb 9, 2009.

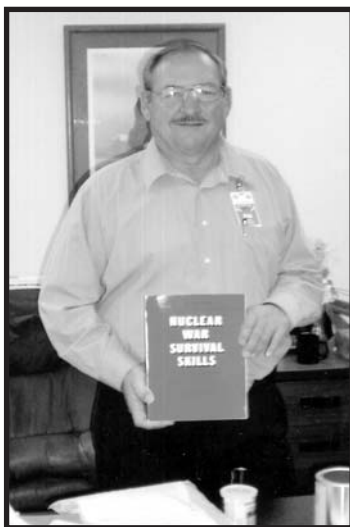


Figure 2. Arizona Director of Emergency Management Lou Trammell.

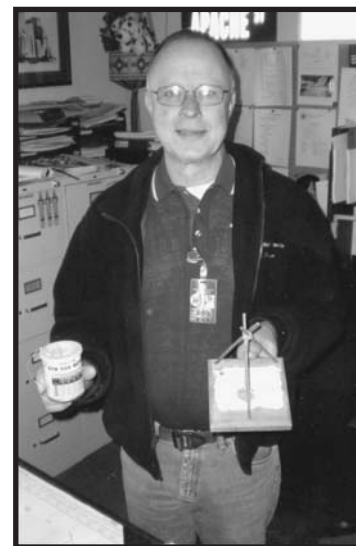


Figure 3. Whiteriver Fire Chief Paul Kuehl with KFM and Indian Weather Stone.