

# Emergency Response and the Office of Radiation Protection

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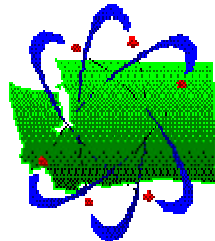
**Fact Sheet 320-095**

Division of Environmental Health  
Office of Radiation Protection



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## Office of Radiation Protection



The Washington State Department of Health is the state radiation control agency. The Department's Office of Radiation Protection works to protect the public and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation. By regulating the uses of radiation and measuring radiation levels, exposure is minimized and health is protected.

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### **OFFICE OF RADIATION PROTECTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN**

*The mission of the Emergency Response Plan is to protect the people, property, and environment of Washington State from the adverse effects of an accidental release of radioactive materials or radiation from a State or federally licensed facility, from radioactive materials being transported*

*through the State, or from any other use of radioactive material, licensed or unlicensed.*

The Emergency Response Plan is a document that sets forth the policies that the State of Washington will follow in the event of a radiological emergency. The plan outlines the criteria for the various levels, or classifications of an accident, and the roles and responsibilities of the state and the involved counties and facilities at the various accident classifications. The Office of Radiation Protection maintains this document.

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## **(206) NUCLEAR**

(206) NUCLEAR or (206) 682-5327 is a 24-hour notification line, established by the Office of Radiation Protection for the sole purpose of reporting any radiation emergency. The Office of Radiation Protection's Nuclear Safety section will answer this line during normal business hours; during off-business hours the call transfers to an answering service who will immediately contact the Emergency Response Duty Officer (ERDO). The ERDO is trained to respond to calls of this nature and is provided with a statewide coverage pager and a cellular phone.

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## **THE OFFICE OF RADIATION PROTECTION'S ROLE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Washington State's Office of Radiation Protection plays a critical role in responding to radiological emergencies. The Emergency Response Plan outlines how the State will respond and the roles could include:

- ◆ Staffing Emergency Response Centers with Trained Technical and Support Staff  
Essential positions can remain staffed continuously, with 12 hour shifts, for as long as deemed necessary.
- ◆ Allocating State Resources
- ◆ Providing Information and Education to the Public
- ◆ Performing Radiological Assessments including Public Dose Assessments and Environmental Assessments
- ◆ Issuing Protective Action Decisions  
Protective actions are actions or policies that are designed to protect human health and safety.
- ◆ Accepting the Leadership of Activities Outside of the Nuclear Facility
- ◆ Maintaining Contact with Federal Agencies and Requesting Federal Resources

On a regular basis the Office of Radiation Protection's Nuclear Safety Section performs these activities to assure responders are ready for an emergency situation:

- ◆ Organize and Conduct Training
  - ◆ Participate in and Coordinate Emergency Drills and Exercises
  - ◆ Provide and Maintain Instrumentation and Equipment
  - ◆ Conduct or Participate in Audits, both Internal and External
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## **SHELTERING AND EVACUATION**

The State or County can issue Protective Action Decisions designed to protect human health and safety during a radiological emergency. Sheltering and evacuation are two actions that apply to the general public.

Depending on the amount and type of radiation released, the pathway of the radiation, the weather conditions, the special needs of the population and the road or traveling conditions, sheltering or evacuation may be necessary. **Sheltering** provides some degree of protection from external radiation and inhalation of gasses and vapors. Sheltering could be chosen when the airborne radiation, or plume, has alpha radiation present and there is an associated inhalation hazard, or when there is a high risk, due to adverse weather or from competing disasters, to evacuate an area. **Evacuation** is the movement of the residents and other general public from the area of concern to avoid or reduce radiation exposure.

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### **Source**

Office of Radiation Protection, Washington State Department of Health

*Links to external resources are provided as a public service and do not imply endorsement by the Washington State Department of Health.*