

ISRP 1999 abstract

Presenter/author	Title	Abstract
Rejnuş, Lars Jönsson, P. Stenlund, H. <i>FOA NBC</i> <i>Defense</i> <i>SE-901 82 Umeå</i> <i>Sweden</i>	NBC- Threats: Is there a Role for Protective Masks for civilians? Survey of an Opinion Poll	<p>In 1981, the Swedish Government decided that all civilians should have access to a protective mask to be distributed in wartime or in special critical situations. Enough masks to provide practically every Swede with a personal mask are now stockpiled in centrally located warehouses. Since the decision in 1981, the main threat has changed dramatically from large scale NBC warfare to peacetime terrorist attacks with BC-agents. These masks might also be useful to protect the general public from accidentally released toxic industrial chemicals (TICS).</p> <p>Should the stockpiled protective masks be distributed to the general public to increase the preparedness against BC-agents or TICS contaminating the neighborhood? In this paper we describe an opinion poll aimed at measuring risk perception, knowledge of the function of protective masks and attitudes with respect to possess and take care of a personal mask.</p> <p>The questionnaires were distributed to 1500 persons, 71% responded. The main findings can be summarized as follows: 44% of the Swedish population know that there is a protective mask reserved for them in case of war or a peacetime crisis, 61% of the male population know how to handle a mask, while only 13% of the females thought so. Part of this difference is likely to be due to experience from compulsory military service. Only 5% of the population had a full knowledge of the protection ability of the mask. However, a majority felt that their personal security would increase if they had access to a personal mask. Only 16% thought it should be a problem to store the mask at home. 24% told that they were willing to pay to get access to a mask of their own. 41% were willing to participate in a field trial with protective masks, whereas 34% expressed uncertainty. We are now planning for field trials at different places in Sweden late this year.</p>