

ISRP 2000 abstract

Presenter/author	Title	Abstract
Rejnuš, Lars Director of Research, FOA Defence Research Establishment, Umeå, Sweden	Individual Preparedness for Protection against Toxic Agents	<p>The readiness of our society to respond to major emergencies or terrorist attacks depends on a number of factors including adequate planning, available equipment and appropriate organisation and training of rescue forces and their command. Efforts are made to master these situations. However, so far no special efforts have been made to increase the individual preparedness.</p> <p>In 1981, the Swedish Government decided that all civilians should have access to a protective mask (available equipment) to be distributed in wartime or in special critical situations for protection against chemical warfare agents, biological agents, and radiation fallout. These masks might also be useful to protect our population from accidentally released toxic industrial chemicals (TICS). Today these masks are stockpiled in centrally located stores. The question, which then arises, is whether the stockpiled protective masks instead could be distributed to the population in order to increase the preparedness against exposure to BC-agents or TICS in case of an incident contaminating their neighbourhood.</p> <p>In this paper we describe an investigation aimed at measuring risk perception, knowledge of the function of protective masks and attitudes with respect to possessing and keeping a personal protective mask. Questionnaires were distributed to 1500 persons were 72% of those responded. We found that the majority of the responders had the opinion that their personal security would increase if they had access to a protective mask of their own. Only 16 % thought that it should be a problem to store the mask at home. As many as 41% were willing to participate in a field trial with protective masks, whereas 34% expressed uncertainty.</p> <p>Based on the result from the opinion poll three field trials in different risk areas are initiated. The field tests are performed in three different 'risk zones'. The village – Hörnefors -, a town with many chemical industries – Landskrona -, and a town where both the railway and the main road are crossing nearby centres with a large population – Jönköping -. More than 500 persons in the age of 10 – 60 years are now engaged in the trial. In this paper we present the initial findings from the field trials. The complete study will be evaluated in the beginning of 2001. Swedish Agency for Emergency Planning (ÖCB) finances the study, and the conclusions drawn from the final results should than be used in the future civil emergency planning processes.</p>