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Title

Crisis Management Yesterday and Now – Societal Changes in Challenges related to Decision-Making and Protective Measures

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Text

The field of crisis management of nuclear or radiological events has developed over many decades. Since the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and the emergence of international conventions and bilateral agreements on early notification, information exchange and assistance, and through experience from several major and minor events in the years after, there has been a continuous work nationally and internationally on developing and updating plans and strategies for crisis management and protective measures.

Decisions are made and protective measures implemented in order to protect lives, health, the environment and other important societal interests. However, public expectations, cultural interests and societal issues needs to be taken into account during the crisis management. Experiences from the Fukushima accident in 2011 and other events the latest years show that current crisis management needs to address a different reality than 10-30 years ago. This paper addresses some of the changes and differences that has been in the last decades.

The new media reality, with continuous news updates with no deadlines, fast and unconfirmed information from sources close to an event site, and extensive use of social media and information channels outside editorial control, place very different demands and challenges on public communication and crisis management than the situation ten years ago. There is also an ever increasing number of voices in the public domain, both experts, non-experts and NGOs.

In addition, many more members of the public have more knowledge on technical issues related to the event, they have their own measuring equipment, they publish their own measuring data and make their own assessments of the situation in a much larger degree than earlier.

Roughly put, earlier the authorities assessed a situation, decided on applicable protective measures, informed the public and implemented the decided measures. Now, there is a public demand for more transparency in the assessments and the decision-making process. They want more detailed information in order to assess the situation and take appropriate actions themselves. The public, and affected stakeholders in particular, want to be involved in the decision-making process to a much larger degree than earlier.

Organisations and authorities with responsibilities in crisis management during nuclear or radiological events need to take this new reality into account, in order to plan and make strategies for future events.