

NUCLEAR WASTE TRANSPORT INCIDENT COULD SPREAD RADIOACTIVITY OVER 100KM

Over 8,000 deaths could be caused by terrorist attack

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A TERRORIST ATTACK on a routine transport of nuclear waste in the UK could spread radiation over 100 kilometres, and cause over 8,000 deaths, according to an internationally renowned nuclear engineer.

The findings come in an independent review of the risks facing the transportation by train of spent nuclear fuel in the UK published today. Nuclear waste is taken by trains from nuclear power stations around the UK to Sellafield, in Cumbria.

In the review, nuclear expert John Large, of Large & Associates, examined potential accidents and acts of terrorism that could severely damage a nuclear waste 'transportation flask', causing the release of radioactivity. As the train routes pass through several large towns and cities, such as London, Bristol and Edinburgh, tens of thousands of people could be exposed to radiation in such an incident.

And local authorities along the nuclear rail routes do not have to prepare any emergency plans or inform the public of what best to do in the event of such an accident or attack.

The review concludes that the transportation flasks containing spent nuclear fuel "provide no extraordinary safeguard against terrorist attack" and would be at their weakest if caught in "the high and sustained temperatures involved in a tunnel fire". According to the review, a damaged transportation flask caught in a tunnel fire could see "significant long-term health detriments extend up to and beyond 50km from the incident centre".

Trains heading from nuclear power stations around the UK to Sellafield travel on the same lines as passenger, freight and hazardous goods trains. Many tunnels, which could accommodate a fire reaching extreme and prolonged temperature, lie along nuclear train routes. Greenpeace has identified several such tunnels in close proximity to large populations of people. These are:

- Primrose Hill tunnel and Hampstead Heath tunnel in **London**;
- Wickwar tunnel, near **Bristol**;
- Bangor tunnel, in **Bangor**;
- Craiglockhart junction tunnel, **Edinburgh**;
- Sevenoaks tunnel, **Sevenoaks**.

The review also shows that security on trains carrying nuclear waste is "minimal", with no apparent special security or police and staffing only by regular railway personnel.

Yet recently it has been reported that photographs, maps and detailed information about nuclear installations and types of radioactive materials were found in a raid following the London bombings last July.

The Government is currently reviewing whether to build new nuclear power stations. According to John Large, the new model of nuclear power stations would result in spent fuel being transported across the UK which "will carry with it a greater unit quantity of radioactivity".

John Large, author of the review, said: "I was very wary of undertaking this review because of the sensitivity of the terrorist threat at this time. However my reservations were quickly surpassed at an early stage of my research when it became obvious just how vulnerable these spent fuel flasks are.

"I believe that open publication of the review is fully justified because by putting this information in the open the Government must now, surely, act to protect the public. This means transportation of intensely radioactive spent fuel must cease."

Emma Gibson of Greenpeace said: "Nuclear energy is ridiculously dangerous, yet the hazardous waste it leaves behind is treated in an amazingly slipshod way.

"This report shows how catastrophic an attack or accident could be, yet still Blair unbelievably seems determined to build more nuclear power stations and create even more perilous radioactive waste.

"In the current climate of a raised terrorist threat, anyone even thinking of building new nuclear power stations can only be described as dangerously irresponsible."

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To see the full copy of *Risks and Hazards Arising in the Transportation of Irradiated Fuel and Nuclear Fuel Materials in the United Kingdom*, go to <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/transporthazards>.

For more information, contact the Greenpeace press office on 020 7865 8255.