

County Prepares For Nuclear Attack

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A nuclear attack is unleashed upon the United States. One of the cities to feel the jolt of an awesome thermonuclear detonation is Chicago.

Seconds after the hydrogen bomb is exploded, crumbling buildings, igniting hundreds of fires and blasting out a huge crater, thousands of tons of tiny particles of dust and debris are sucked upward high into the air.

They form the familiar mushroom cloud, and then begin to drift away. By now, these particles have become killers—made radioactive by the nuclear explosion.

East Central Illinois lies in the down-wind path of this airborne death and destruction. They drift over rural areas, small towns and farms. And the fall-out begins to rain down.

You can't see it.
You can't feel it.

But it soaks into the soil of unprotected fields. It penetrates crops standing in neat rows. It contaminates unprotected livestock, spilling out of the sky and settling to earth.

These are not pleasant thoughts. But they could materialize into harsh reality.

What may seem like fiction or fantasy now could become fact . . . in a matter of minutes.

And in event of a nuclear attack, it is to agriculture the country will turn for survival . . . for food to sustain itself until the nation can recover.

Civil defense officials have pointed out that farmers and rural residents do not face the peril of a direct atomic hit that industrial centers do.

It is the threat of fall-out resulting from the blasts that endangers the rest of the country.

And the rural areas have launched preparations for an attack.

In Champaign County, for example, the County Agriculture Defense Board has been organized.

With four members, this board is responsible for pre-emergency defense planning.

"Built-in readiness" is the theme . . . organization and planning now so that in event of an emergency, food supplies can be distributed, the damage assessed and the land checked for further production.

Members of the board include:
Frank Schoone, chairman, office manager of the county

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Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the government agency which administers practically all of the major federal farm programs, including storage of the surplus and measurement of acreage allotments.

L. H. Monke, Champaign County soil conservationist with the SCS, in charge of preserving and protecting the soil against erosion and recommending practices which will increase yields without draining away the productive potential of the ground.

Earl C. Brantz, county farm adviser, who relays information from the Extension Service to farmers and generally supplies reports which will be helpful in individual farming operations.

Robert W. Bills, with the Agricultural Research Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, supplying information on new developments in farming and a wide array of statistics.

"The board has met twice and will meet again this week," Schoone reported. "Right now we're just getting organized, making sure that each person knows his duties and setting up pre-emergency facilities.

Schoone will be in charge of restoring or establishing food processing, storage and distributing facilities.

Each ASCS office is supplied with information on individual farms from which can be obtained the county's production status as well as its potential.

The committee will assess damage after an attack, conduct salvage operations, administer market regulatory programs and food orders, as well as distribution of new machinery, equipment and fertilizer so that farming may be resumed as soon as possible.

"We will handle food from the wholesale level up. Civil Defense takes it on the retail level," Schoone explained.

It may be that the government storage bins will be filled with commodities in a different form in the future. Several programs have been advanced calling for the

conversion of excess crops now in storage into compressed, ready-to-eat form.

These foods would be stockpiled around the country, presumably away from prime targets, so that the population could be fed until agricultural production could be resumed.

Most programs have called for at least a two year's supply of these concentrated foods.

These programs have not advanced beyond the "surge" stage at present, however. But presumably the foods would be stored in the same bins and warehouses that now hold wheat, corn, grain sorghums and soybeans.

Several food companies reportedly are at work on research developing all-purpose low-cost, nutritious food waters.

Monke and other soil conservationists will be "checking the temperature" of the land after a nuclear blast.

Radiological monitoring stations equipped with Geiger counters to detect the presence of radioactivity and measure its intensity are being established.

Officials say 4,800 of these stations eventually will be set up in Illinois. The SCS now has 90 and Civil Defense 200 in the state.

"The lands and water will be covered with these monitors and from the collected data, the land capability will be appraised and officials may be able to determine which acres have been damaged least by fall-out and are suitably free from contamination to be farmed.

Brantz and other farm advisers will be the "information specialists."

Farm advisers will furnish information on reducing the county's vulnerability to attack, particularly in rural areas, and production adjustments which will be needed, as well as informing the public on the effects of fall-out.

Bills and other ARS officials will direct the use of radiological monitoring units in meat and poultry slaughtering and processing plants, and stockyards. The ARS also will be responsible for disease and pest control, enforcement of quarantines and the safety and wholesomeness of meat and meat products.

The Agricultural Marketing Service will develop standard by plans for carrying out crop and livestock estimates under emergency conditions, while the Farmers Home Administration will be responsible for credit programs and financing production.