

JOINT DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE AND  
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION AGREEMENT OF GENERAL AREAS  
OF RESPONSIBILITY AND PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO THE  
PROMPT, EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED RESPONSE TO  
ACCIDENTS INVOLVING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

27 February 1958

ARM2.950109.002

1. Purpose: To set forth the general areas of responsibility and general procedures required for prompt, effective and coordinated response to accidents involving nuclear weapons.

2. Implementation: The Military Services, AFSWP, and the AEC will issue instructions to implement this agreement.

3. Responsibilities:

a. The commander of the military or AEC installation or facility nearest the accident will assume immediate control at the scene of the accident and take such immediate emergency action, within the limits of his capability, as may be necessary to minimize the initial results of the accident. He will maintain control until relieved by the commander having primary responsibility as set forth in paragraph b or c below.

b. Primary command responsibility for control at the scene of an accident, except under circumstances set forth in c below, rests with the Service or Agency having physical possession of the weapon at the time of the incident. Command at the scene will be assumed as soon as possible by the nearest or designated representative of the appropriate Service or Agency.

c. Primary command responsibility for control in the area where action is required in connection with accidents of a domestic emergency nature will rest with the Department of the Army. This is in consonance with expressions of "general policy" and "assignment of responsibility" contained in Sections V and VI of DOD Directive 3025.1. For the purpose of delineating command responsibility under these circumstances, an accident of domestic emergency nature is said to exist when the damage is obviously, or finally determined through survey to be, of such magnitude as to fall within the scope of the definition set forth as guidance in paragraph 1, Appendix A, of DOD Directive 3025.1. This definition is quoted for ready reference as follows: "The term 'domestic emergency' applies to emergencies occurring in and affecting the public welfare of the continental United States, its territories and possessions, as a result of enemy attack, insurrection, civil disturbances, earthquakes, fire, flood, or other public disasters or equivalent emergencies which endanger life and property or disrupt the usual processes of government."

d. AFSWP and the AEC will establish a Joint Coordinating Center (Field Command, AFSWP-AIO) to provide a centralized agency for coordinating assistance and information concerning accidents involving nuclear weapons.

e. The Military Services, AFSWP and the AEC may request assistance from the Coordinating Center at any time in the event of an accident.

f. The Military Services, AFSWP and the AEC will respond to requests from the Coordinating Center and local areas for mutual assistance, subject to command and operational limitations.

4. Procedures:

a. The Military Services, AFSWP and the AEC will provide to the Coordinating Center information necessary to the maintenance of a current location list of specialized "teams" or units having the capability of rendering service in the various skills or fields appropriate to the peculiar requirements of nuclear weapon accidents.

b. The Military Services, AFSWP and the AEC individually will determine the channels of communication between their respective elements and the Coordinating Center.

c. When the services of the Coordinating Center are being employed, commanders concerned shall keep the Center informed of the status of the effort at the accident scene.

d. The "mission" and the principal "tasks and functions" of the Coordinating Center are as set forth below. Specific SOP's will be developed by the Coordinating Center for its use, based upon the implementing directives issued by each of the Military Services, AFSWP and the AEC to their subordinate elements. The operational essentials of such SOP's will be furnished for information to all concerned.

(1) Mission: To provide a centralized agency for coordinating assistance and information concerning accidents involving nuclear weapons.

(2) Principal "Tasks and Functions":

(a) Maintain current information as to the location of specialized DOD and AEC teams or activities capable of responding to accidents involving nuclear weapons.

(b) Receive requests for assistance.

(c) Request necessary assistance from appropriate DOD or AEC teams or activities.

(d) Provide all available information to appropriate commands and agencies.

(e) Where pertinent, obtain complete information regarding the type of weapon and system from operators or custodians when such individuals are known, for relay to the accident scene.

(f) Refer public queries to the responsible agency.

By Authority of the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and  
the Commissioners, Atomic Energy Commissions:

FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMY

26 February 1958  
(Date)

/s/ DWIGHT E. BEACH  
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Director of Guided Missiles,  
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Official:

ARLEIGH BURKE  
Chief of Naval Operations

/s/  
G. Serpell Patrick  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy  
Director, Atomic Energy Division

FOR THE AIR FORCE:

6 February 1958  
(Date)

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Major General, USAF  
Assistant for Atomic Energy  
DCS/O, Hq USAF

/s/  
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Rear Admiral, USN  
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