

San Francisco Has No Idea What To Do When North Korea Nukes Them!

San Francisco's notoriously corrupt politicians spend more of their time trying to scam real estate deals and snatch some Google stock payola than they do trying to protect the public. With San Francisco's Millennium Tower office building falling down due to corrupt building deals, Police getting fired left and right, for sex scandals and corruption, and epic crony payola issues bring the public to a boil, it is no wonder San Francisco law makers have no effective system for a pending attack.

In the last big San Francisco Earthquake, the City had no gasoline for emergency generators, no working batteries for EMT flashlights, no fire-hoses that did not burn themselves up in the fires, few working fire hydrants, way too short fire hoses, no public central command system, no provision to stop the looters that ran at will down Market Street, no provision to account for the Red Cross donations (much of which was embezzled by executives), and many other disasters within the disaster.

San Francisco has known for a long time that they were the first-in-line for an attack by North Korea, yet reporters now discover that nothing of major value has been done to prepare for this potential major disaster. Politicians figure that they will all be dead in the blast, so they won't have to deal with angry members of the public. The SF Gate and San Francisco State investigators looked closer:

Can SF plan for surviving a North Korean nuclear strike?

By [Lizzie Johnson](#)



Photo: Gabrielle Lurie, The Chronicle

Image 1 of 9

(l-r) Auxillary Communication Service (ACS) Chief Lawrence Lin and volunteer Peter McElmury get ready for Siren #1 (center) to go off at 22nd and Carolina Streets in San Francisco, Calif., on Tuesday, Aug. 8, ... more

As President Trump reacts to Pyongyang’s nuclear belligerence against the U.S. with a threat of unleashing “fire and fury” on North Korea, local governments have begun worrying about whether they should revive a fixture of the darkest days of the Cold War — the civil defense plan.

Duck-and-cover drills and backyard fallout shelters are unlikely to come back in vogue. But the possibility that North Korea could drop a nuclear bomb on the Bay Area or other West Coast urban center — capabilities that Kim Jung Un’s regime is thought to be close to achieving — raises questions about how those who survive an attack would survive the aftermath.

Emergency managers of big cities are discussing how to address the threat of an attack if the “horrible thing actually happens,” said Michael Dayton, deputy director for emergency services for San Francisco’s Department of Emergency Management.

North Korean missile crisis



[Trump warns North Korea of ‘fire and fury’ if it threatens US](#)



[Editorial: Cool the saber rattling, President Trump](#)

- [Analysis: Trump's 'fire and fury' statement echoes North Korea's](#)

“I don’t know if anybody is doing it well right now,” Dayton said. “An intercontinental ballistic missile is a new concern in terms of preventative radiological nuclear detention. ... Our previous efforts have focused on what happens if a bad actor got ahold of a dirty bomb and set it off on the Golden Gate Bridge.”

The tension level with North Korea increased sharply Tuesday. The Washington Post first reported that the Defense Intelligence Agency believes Pyongyang has developed a miniaturized nuclear warhead that could be carried by an intercontinental ballistic missile, the type that could reach the West Coast of the U.S.

Then, President Trump told reporters: “North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.”

The blast from a nuclear missile like the one North Korea is believed to be close to possessing would create a fireball a mile in diameter, with temperatures as hot as the sun’s surface and winds greater than a hurricane’s force, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Radioactive fallout would be scattered over hundreds of miles.

Think of it as an earthquake times 1,000. County offices of emergency services typically have recovery plans for earthquakes or other natural disasters, but a nuclear attack would cause unique horrors.

Hospitals that remained standing would be overwhelmed with initial survivors and, later, people with radiation poisoning. Bridges and other freeway infrastructure would be damaged or destroyed, making getting into or out of the Bay Area all but impossible. The economy would grind to a halt.

“The survivors would envy the dead,” said Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear weapons analyst with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey. “The best thing to do would be to not make it. It’s gruesome.”



Photo: Gabrielle Lurie, The Chronicle

(l-r) Auxillery Communication Service (ACS) volunteer Peter McElmury takes notes as a member of the public called in over the radio to describe the sound of the sirens they were hearing in San Francisco, Calif., on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 2017. Peter McElmury and Chief of ACS Lawrence Lin (not pictured) take calls from members of the public who listen to the weekly siren alert system and call in to describe its effectiveness.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which coordinates federal responses to natural disasters, has a sample plan that local governments can use to draw up their own day-after survival blueprints for a nuclear attack. [The document](#), created in October 2016, includes guidelines on reducing radiation exposure, sheltering in place and planning for long-term relocation.

It notes that a nuclear blast will be a “complex, catastrophic disaster that exceeds traditional and specialized response capabilities of the United States.”

“Cities like San Francisco may find (it) useful in their own planning,” said FEMA spokeswoman Stephanie Moffett.

On the West Coast, Ventura County is one of the few local governments to have drawn up a recent postnuclear survival document. The 252-page plan assumes that a nuclear bomb has hit downtown Los Angeles, roughly 60 miles to the southeast, and includes details for everything from clearing transportation routes to handling fallout and disposing of dead bodies. On the plan’s cover, a mushroom cloud balloons into the sky.

The county document encourages residents to have a set plan and communication system in place, and be ready to shelter in place in a room without windows. When they issued the plan in 2013, county officials held a series of community meetings and provided public schools with an informational curriculum.

In one two-minute [YouTube video](#) created by the county's Health Care Agency, a young girl with dark hair falling over her eyes holds a stack of papers with messages on them. She drops each sheet one by one: "Mom, I know you care about me," says the first, followed by, "When I was 5, you taught me how to stop, drop and roll," and, "But what if something bigger happens?" The scene flashes to the girl walking down abandoned streets alone.

Then, a string of tips: "Get inside. Stay inside. Stay tuned."

"There is no downside to educating the public," said Dr. Robert Levin, Ventura County's public health officer. "One of the lessons I have learned over time is that people want to know what to do. It can be a long list or a short list, but it has to be a practical list. It would make a huge difference in a nuclear event and save hundreds of thousands of lives."

San Francisco does not have specific plans for how to handle a nuclear explosion, though Dayton says the city would use emergency preparations in place for other disasters, like fires, floods and earthquakes, as a guide.

If a nuclear bomb did hit the Bay Area, San Francisco officials would turn to the city's emergency response plan, an all-disaster guide that includes guidance for health, law enforcement and firefighting. The blueprint is updated in full every five years; the last time it was done was in 2013.

The city does have technology to measure radiation levels, like Los Angeles and San Diego. Officials bought the devices to measure fallout in the event terrorists detonated a dirty bomb — a conventional explosive device that includes radioactive material — but they could also be used in the aftermath of a nuclear missile strike.

"In a nuclear attack, the response would not be limited to local resources but would also require regional, state and national response," said Rachael Kagan, a spokeswoman for the San Francisco Public Health Department. "Generally, law enforcement would be lead in any terrorism or military attack."

Public awareness is an important aspect of defense, said Alex Wellerstein, a nuclear weapons historian and assistant professor at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, N.J. He recently started Reinventing Civil Defense, a nonprofit that seeks to renew public education efforts about nuclear threats.

The chances of North Korea being able to target San Francisco and score a direct hit are still low, because Pyongyang hasn't tested whether its missiles can reliably carry the weight of a nuclear warhead, Wellerstein said. But a near-hit would be bad enough — a missile striking anywhere on the mainland U.S. would probably kill thousands.

“There are a few cities and counties that have tried to reach out to the public, but it is still very rare and somewhat idiosyncratic,” Wellerstein said. “Ventura County has been doing this for a few years now. ... It has attracted some attention and some ridicule. Is this effective? I don’t know.”

The answer is no, said Siegfried Hecker, a professor of management science and engineering at Stanford University and a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico.

“I think that the threat of a nuclear attack on the U.S. mainland, and that includes San Francisco, is very, very overstated,” said Hecker, a plutonium expert. “Unfortunately, we have gotten the American public almost into a sense of panic over being nuked by the North Koreans.”

Even the most well-intentioned public education campaigns can encourage fearmongering, said Lewis, the nuclear weapons analyst in Monterey.

“People are not aware there is a risk now because it seems ridiculous,” Lewis said. “No matter how often North Korea tests these missiles, no matter how many models we run showing that it can hit the United States, people assume it can’t. It’s very hard to convince Americans that it is a real threat. But at the same time, Kim Jong Un probably isn’t going to just wake up tomorrow and launch a missile. It’s a hard balance to strike: education without fear.”

But there is more that can be done to increase security at the state level, said Mark Ghilarducci, Gov. Jerry Brown’s homeland security adviser and the director of the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services.

“Part of preparedness includes a well-informed public,” he said. “If you live in California, you live in a disaster-prone state. You’re aware that you are in earthquake country, that there are wildfires and flooding. A nuclear or terrorist attack, you know it could happen, but you’re not really thinking about it as much. It’s specifically about getting everyone on the same page.”

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Surviving the unthinkable

What can you do during a nuclear attack? If there is any warning, take cover in a basement or heavily reinforced building, the Federal Emergency Management Agency says in a civil defense manual. Then:

Lie flat on the ground and cover your head. If the explosion is some distance away, it could take 30 seconds or more for the shock wave to hit.

Do not look at the flash or fireball, which can blind you.

Avoid windows, which can shatter.

If authorities say it is safe to evacuate, do so quickly.

Otherwise, remain sheltered in place, even if you are many miles from the blast site. Wind can carry radioactive fallout for hundreds of miles.

If you are exposed to radiation, remove outer layer of clothing and shower if possible. Seek medical help.

Everyone is encouraged to watch the film: ***The Day After***, for tips on aftermath issues, find it at:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085404/>