

Criticisms sent to IPSN on the estimation of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident in France

26 April 2006

The main purpose of this report is to attempt to answer the questions and criticisms regularly sent to the public body for expertise in safety and radiation protection, concerning its estimation of fallout from the Chernobyl accident in France. This report, commissioned by the Director of IPSN in 2001 and then by the provisional Administrator of IRSN in 2002, was not made public because the results of the mission entrusted to Professor André Aurengo by the Ministers for Ecology and Health were pending and it was preferable not to interfere with them.

In accordance with the engagement letters sent in September 2001 and September 2002 to Mr. Daniel Robeau, the author of this report, and who at the time was coordinator of Chernobyl studies at IRSN, the work was carried out in two stages: first of all, the main criticisms sent to the Institute were identified and answers based on IRSN's internal expertise were given to these criticisms. Then, a working group made up of different players was formed (institutions, journalists, associations) to study the pertinence of the information gathered and to complete the report if necessary. The second engagement letter specified that the results of this work could contribute to Professor Aurengo's study.

The members of the group did not give a formal opinion on the information gathered by IRSN. More than anything, the working group represented a place of open exchange where the need for clarifications was expressed. This led to the initial report being completed with contextual information, like reminders of national and international regulations applicable in the event of accidents (chapter 2) and of the history of the maps produced by the different players involved (chapter 3). Finally, the technical exposés given at the group's request and the debates which they sparked off are also presented (chapter 4).

The actual report is preceded by a summary / conclusion that focuses on the main answers that the Institute gave to the questions and criticisms identified: information on the measurements taken, cartographic representations, an estimation of the population's levels of exposure, an estimation of the impact on health, further information on regulatory aspects, further information on the succession of maps of different origins. In conclusion, it is stressed that the present document limits its study to the action of IPSN in its capacity as a research and expertise body. It is also stressed that the documents assembled highlight:

A discrepancy between society's expectations and IPSN's possibilities of public expression in the 1980s when it was within the CEA and in charge of research and expertise and not testing.

The Institute's efforts, especially since the 10th anniversary of the catastrophe, at rebuilding the dialogue with civil society.