

The Advisory Team for Environment, Food, and Health

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

(current May , 20)

1. What (who) is the Advisory Team?

The Federal Radiological Preparedness Coordinating Committee (FRPCC) established the Subcommittee for Environment, Food, and Health. Its surrogate, the Advisory Team for Environment, Food, and Health (Advisory Team) was established to assist in international and domestic nuclear emergencies. A brief history follows.

The Advisory Team concept was incorporated into the Federal Radiological Emergency Response Plan (FRERP) in May 1996. In 1997, an Environment, Food, and Health Subcommittee of the FRPCC was established. (44CFR351.11.) In 2004, the FRERP was superseded by the National Response Plan (NRP). The NRP contains plan annexes, one of which is the Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex. In March of 2008, the NRP was superseded by the National Response Framework (NRF). All previous annexes to the NRP remained in effect.

The duties of the Advisory Team were incorporated into the Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex on December 2005. The Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex, last revised and posted to the NRF website in June of 2008, remains in effect today.

The Advisory Team membership includes the Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)¹ and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the US Department of Agriculture (USDA); and other Federal agencies as requested.

2. How is the Advisory Team activated and deployed? How long are Advisory Team members available to local responders/officials in the field?

*The Advisory Team will be activated when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), a Coordinating Agency, or a State, tribal or local government contacts the FDA's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by calling **866-300-4347** and requests support from the Advisory Team. DOE will request activation of the Advisory Team whenever the FRMAC is activated.*

¹ Health physics staff of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are included in the CDC membership of the Advisory Team.

After receiving a request for Advisory Team support, the FDA will then contact each member agency (according to directions provided to FDA by member agencies) and declare that a request for Advisory Team support has been made. Each member agency will then follow their own internal procedure for notifying/activating their designated Advisory Team members. Once formally activated, the team representatives establish a remote phone bridge with their fellow team members and others as needed including the Coordinating Agency and the DOE Consequence Management Home Team (CMHT).

If requested by a Federal agency or a State, local or tribal government, and with concurrence of the Coordinating Agency, the Advisory Team member agencies will follow their own agency procedures for deploying team members to the location(s) designated by the Coordinating Agency. According to the Nuclear/Radiological Incident Annex, the Advisory Team is expected to integrate into the Incident Command (IC)/Unified Command (UC) in the Planning Section to provide technical expertise to the IC/UC and to the Coordinating Agency. Team members arriving onsite would elect a site Advisory Team Chairperson. The site Advisory Team Chairperson would maintain communication with the IC/UC.

Advisory Team members will be on call and available for as long as the local customers require their expertise.

3. Should a radiological emergency occur, how many people are typically deployed from the Advisory Team to assist with the radiological emergency?

Team members and availability will vary with the extent of the incident. Deployed team members onsite will usually consist of the site Advisory Team Chairperson, a Documentation Unit Leader (records manager), and at least one agency subject matter expert. For most responses, a full team will not arrive for at least 24 hours and the on-site team members will perform multiple tasks. See the answer to FAQ # 16 for a list of recommended resources to support Advisory Team operations.

4. What are typical issues that Advisory Team members may be called upon to address?

The Advisory Team provides advice in matters related to the following:

- *Environmental assessments (field monitoring) required for developing recommendations with advice from State, tribal and local governments and/or the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC);*
- *Protective Action Guides (PAGs) and their application to the emergency;*
- *Protective Action Recommendations (PARs) using data and assessment from the FRMAC;*

- *Protective actions to prevent or minimize contamination of milk, food, and water, and to prevent or minimize exposure through ingestion or inhalation;*
- *Recommendations regarding the disposition of contaminated pets, livestock, poultry, other agricultural products (feed and crops), and foods;*
- *Recommendations for minimizing losses of agricultural resources;*
- *Provide guidance on availability of clean food, animal feed, and water supply inspection programs to ensure wholesomeness;*
- *Recommendations on relocation, reentry, and other radiation protection measures prior to recovery;*
- *Recommendations for recovery, return, and cleanup issues;*
- *Health and safety advice or information for the public and for emergency workers;*
- *Estimated effects of radioactive releases on human health and the environment; and*
- *Other matters, as requested by the IC/UC or the Coordinating Agency.*

5. What policy decisions are made by the Advisory Team?

None. The Advisory Team is an advisory body that makes protective action recommendations.

The Advisory Team DOES NOT make policy decisions or protective action decisions. State, local and tribal authorities are responsible for making policy and protective action decisions.

The Advisory Team DOES provide coordinated technical and scientific advice through the Coordinating Agency, not directly to State and elected officials. Recommendations and advice are based on science and best practices. The Coordinating Agency is responsible for ensuring that all outputs from the Advisory Team are shared with appropriate response organizations.

6. What if incident command disagrees with Advisory Team recommendations?

The Advisory Team makes recommendations based on technical and scientific information available and current best practices. There are likely to be societal factors that impact decision making. The decisions made by the incident command or other decision makers may take all those factors into consideration. The advice from the Advisory Team is only one of those factors.

7. Does the Advisory Team talk to the media?

The Advisory Team will refer all requests for media interviews to the Joint Information Center. If there is no Joint Information Center, the Advisory Team

will refer media requests to the Coordinating Agency. Advisory Team members will inform their parent agency's communications staff according to agency policy. Members of the onsite Advisory Team will not normally hold media interviews. Advisory Team members will speak directly to the media only with approval from their parent agency and if requested to do so by the Coordinating Agency.

Public information officials can consult the Advisory Team, but the responses should be coordinated as "one voice" and not give conflicting information about the same inquiries. The Coordinating Agency should be the primary point of contact for interface with the media.

8. What Agencies provide members for the Advisory Team?

The Advisory Team membership includes participation from individuals working for the Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA); the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the US Department of Agriculture (USDA); and other Federal agencies as requested.

9. What knowledge requirements should serving members have?

Each Subcommittee member and potential Advisory Team member shall have a basic understanding of the concepts of radiation detection, dosimetry and protection. They shall have a basic understanding of the EPA and FDA protective action guides (PAGs) and derived intervention levels (DILs), and their use. Each Team member should be able to convey his or her own parent agency directives as applicable to radiological health and public safety.

Team members must possess a working knowledge of resources such as the Consequence Management Web (CMweb), the National Atmospheric Release Advisory Center (NARAC) and the Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center (IMAAAC) and possess the appropriate computer accounts to access these resources. Members should possess a working knowledge of the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC) and its function during an event. Team members must be familiar with the data products produced by the FRMAC and NARAC/IMAAAC and be able to convey their meaning to on-site and other customers as applicable.

Members should be familiar with current incident command procedures and posture and government agency memoranda of understanding. Each team member should be familiar with Advisory Team field operations including Advisory Team chain of command and local incident command functionality (i. e.

the Advisory Team should integrate into the Planning Section and/or co-locate with the FRMAC).

10. When an event happens and my local response resources are overwhelmed, how do I request the Advisory Team?

*If an event is significant enough, normal chains of communication usually proceed through local governmental entities, then through gubernatorial venues, then through Regional FEMA contacts and finally notification of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), National Operations Center, in Washington, DC. After an event has occurred, the State, local or tribal government can directly contact the FDA's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by calling **866-300-4374** and request support from the radiological Advisory Team. Such requests will activate the Advisory Team. Also, the DOE will request activation of the Advisory Team whenever the FRMAC is activated.*

After receiving a request for Advisory Team support, the FDA will then contact each Subcommittee member agency and declare that a request for Advisory Team support has been made. Each member agency will then follow their own internal procedure for notifying/activating their designated Advisory Team members.

11. What is the "remote" Advisory Team?

The "remote" Advisory Team consists of agency team members linked together with each other as well as the Subcommittee Chairperson (or designee) and the site Advisory Team Chairperson (if applicable), by phone bridge. The goal is to have a remote Advisory Team within 2 hours of the initial notification to the FDA EOC. Each team member will maintain contact with his/her parent agency and provide updates of Advisory Team activities. Some or all remote team members should have access to internet resources such as the CMweb and NARAC/IMAAC. The remote Advisory Team will be used during exercises and actual events.

12. How do I request the services of a remote Advisory Team?

*After an actual event, the remote Advisory Team is the precursor to the deployment of other team members to the incident scene. Requests for remote and/or on-site Advisory Team support during an actual event should be routed through the FDA by contacting the FDA EOC at **866-300-4374**.*

A remote Advisory Team may also be activated for an exercise. Requests for Advisory Team support for exercises should be addressed to the Regional FEMA offices during the planning phase of an exercise. Requests for Advisory Team

participation in exercises can also be made by contacting Jeff Sincek (FDA) at 614-227-5780 x1111 ([e-mail Jeffrey.Sincek@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:Jeffrey.Sincek@fda.hhs.gov)).

13. After an incident occurs, when is the Advisory Team available?

The goal is to have a remote Advisory Team within 2 hours of the initial notification to the FDA EOC. Each team member will maintain contact with his/her parent agency and provide updates of Advisory Team activities. The Advisory Team members must be activated in order to deploy to the scene.

If requested by a state, tribal or local government, and with concurrence of the Coordinating Agency, the Advisory Team member agencies will follow their own agency procedures for dispatching team members to the location(s) designated by the Coordinating Agency. When established at the scene, the on-site Advisory Team members will assume control of Advisory Team activities. At best, the physical deployment and assembly of the on-site team could take 24 hours.

14. Does the Advisory Team tell us what to do?

No. The Advisory Team has no regulatory authority. The Advisory Team provides expert guidance and advice to decision makers regarding radiological protection of the public, emergency workers, the use and meaning of PAGs, and late phase incident recovery actions. To provide this service, the Advisory Team will use standard briefing products provided from the FRMAC. Customers (State, local officials, etc.) are encouraged to request that FRMAC generate the standard briefing products to accommodate their concerns and needs.

15. To whom does the Advisory Team report?

The Advisory Team is expected to incorporate into the Incident Command (IC)/Unified Command (UC) in the Planning Section to provide technical expertise to the IC/UC and the Coordinating Agency. The Advisory Team may also provide liaisons to and/or coordinate with the Principal Federal Official, Joint Field Office, State, local and tribal government Emergency Operation Centers, and others as needed. Therefore, the Advisory Team may be in several locations at any one time, including being co-located with the FRMAC. When located at multiple locations, the Advisory Team will rely upon phone bridges and internet connections to communicate with other Advisory Team members and their parent agencies.

16. If the services of the Advisory Team are requested, what resources will they require from my organization or the host agency?

When deployed, the Advisory Team will request the following resources from the host agency:

- *Work space for 6 or more*
- *Telephone lines (at least 2)*
- *Electrical outlets (at least 4)*

At least one computer terminal with high speed Internet access must be available. Internet access may require secure connection and should be evaluated on a case by case basis by the site Advisory Team Chairperson.

The resources listed above are in response to a larger incident. The host agency is typically NOT the local or state organization, but rather a larger entity such as the Coordinating Agency, or Cooperating Agency, during earlier phases of response. The needed facilities to support Advisory Team members for longer term operations will be provided by the Coordinating Agency. Team member wages and compensation will be provided by their respective parent agencies.

17. Advisory Team membership requires experience, so what experience is required?

Team members should regularly participate in at least one exercise annually in a support or on-site Advisory Team capacity. Exercises may include ingestion pathway exercises for nuclear power plants, national scale drills, military or DOE exercises involving Special Nuclear Material (SNM) or other radioactive materials as well as detailed interagency table top discussions.

Team members must possess appropriate training and experience in field activities, drills, plume exercises, ingestion exercises, or actual event responses commensurate with their function in the field or in supporting response operations. All Team members must be proficient in the use of computer and web based communication, documentation and analytic tools, and be equipped so as to be self sufficient in internet applications and communications technology to the degree required by the event or exercise .

18. How can I request more information about the Advisory Team?

*Additional information about the Advisory Team can be obtained from the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors (CRCPD) website at <http://www.crcpd.org>. Direct instructional information can be requested from the Advisory Team through its outreach program. Please call Jeffrey Sincek at **614-227-5780 x1111** (e-mail Jeffrey.Sincek@fda.hhs.gov) to schedule an outreach presentation from an Advisory Team member or to request Advisory Team participation in an exercise.*

*For Advisory Team assistance during an actual event, State, tribal, or local governments should/can directly contact the FDA's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by calling **866-300-4374** and request support from the radiological Advisory Team.*

19. What is the level of participation required for the Advisory Team during drills and exercises?

Advisory Team participants work closely with State, local and tribal officials regarding protection of the public from radiation detriment. Under the direction of the site Advisory Team Chairperson, on-site team members work within the Incident/Unified Command Planning Section. Team members may be asked to function in a liaison capacity with the State, local and tribal customers and the Coordinating Agency. The team will provide advice through the Coordinating Agency as requested. Team members will also assist customers with the understanding of FRMAC/NARAC data products used in decision making by judges, Governors, commissioners, and other publically elected officials. The use of Advisory Team liaisons is highly encouraged. Liaisons are familiar with the FRMAC briefing products which are available to help public officials understand the scope of radiological events. Team members are available to assist customers during incidents from the onset (using the remote team), through the intermediate and recovery phases. The Advisory Team is an added resource to State, local and tribal governments regarding many radiation protection issues. It is not a function of the Advisory Team to assume control of an incident scene, make policy with regard to radiation protection, or mandate compliance with applicable regulations.

On-site team members maintain contact between their parent organizations and the Subcommittee Chairperson (or designee such as the Advisory Team Logistics Coordinator). Remote support for Advisory Team activities is provided from member organization locations across the country.