



Photo by Tom Gessner

Homecoming Royalty

Homecoming royalty during Nebraska's 42-0 victory against Kansas were Tanya Harms and Clark Miller. First attendants were Jennifer Smith and Jack Clarke.

Atomic emergency plan bad—Fowler

By Rich Jurgens

There is no evacuation plan for Omaha residents in case of a nuclear accident from the Fort Calhoun nuclear power plant 25 miles away, Omaha civil defense officials said Friday.

Adjutant Gen. Edward Binder, state civil director, said Omaha does not have any plans for evacuating Omaha residents in case of a nuclear accident.

Binder and others testified before the Legislature's Public Works Committee to determine if Nebraska's nuclear emergency plan is in the interest of public safety.

Sen. Steve Fowler of Lincoln said the lack of an evacuation plan for Omaha was one of the major flaws in Nebraska's nuclear emergency plan.

Binder said that Douglas County and Omaha officials can establish evacuation plans, but that the governor is the only official empowered to order such an evacuation.

A state senator from Pennsylvania also testified at the hearing. His testimony concerned Fowler's proposed legislative bill requiring evacuation plans in case of a nuclear accident.

Pennsylvania State Sen. George Gekas, told the committee that the radiation leak at Three Mile Island last spring has caused the Pennsylvania legislature to look for a better evacuation plan.

NEBRASKA IS HEADING in the right direction toward nuclear safety when it provides formalized plans for evacuation, Gekas said.

He said although there was no formalized evacuation plan for the Three Mile Island incident, he thought the governor of Pennsylvania acted well, considering the circumstances.

Binder told the committee how Nebraska's emergency plan is organized, and that the evacuation would be used only as a last resort.

Nebraska's emergency plan has been approved by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and is one which the NRC plans on using as a model for other states, Binder said.

Fowler said the plan does not provide enough detail for evacuation.

THE PRESENT REGULATIONS have serious deficiencies, Fowler said. He said it fails to provide provisions to inform the public in case of a nuclear accident.

He also said the plan has no provisions to shelter people or evacuate, with transportation, people visiting the area or people in hospitals and nursing homes. The plan also doesn't have adequate detection devices for amounts of radiation already leaked, and there is no method of testing or drilling in case of a more serious accident.

Gekas said Pennsylvania had no direct lines of communication with Three Mile Island and said he hoped this would change, with the governor being the head of communications in the event of an accident.

"At one point when we were ready to start evacuation, there was a great deal of silence," Gekas said. He said that up-dates on the problem should have been given every 15 minutes, whether there were any new developments or not. Not knowing only makes the situation worse, Gekas said.

CONtact makes use of others' ideas

By Lynn Mongar

Karen is 24 years old, pregnant and unmarried. She needs help finding advice and medical care. She calls CONTACT Inc., which provides her with the names of people and places that can help.

CONTACT, an agency that connects people who need help with human service agencies, receives more than 500 referrals for assistance and information each month. The agency, at North 27th Street and Industrial Park Avenue, is the only agency of its kind in the world, according to Gary Hill, its founder and president.

Hill said the philosophy of CONTACT is that every community has the ingredients to meet all basic human needs.

He explained that a person's life may be dependent upon a prompt answer from CONTACT. So, the agency, which is open continuously, works under the clock's pressure. Crisis situations take less than 24 hours and other calls for referral take about 48 hours.

"You have to perceive it through the eyes of a prisoner, or the person in trouble," Hill said.

A full-time staff of 40 people and more than 80 volunteers organize and maintain three large rooms of resource files identifying agencies, individuals and communities involved in various phases of human services.

Hill said that keeping the volumes of information and files organized is not as hard as it might seem.

"We're just good secretaries," he said.

Hill said bureaucracy causes too much specialization in government agencies. Sometimes, the paperwork can send a person from one place to another without solving a

problem, he said.

"We just coordinate everything," he said.

The agency receives calls from across the nation. For example, if an inmate in Oregon needs housing and a job in Illinois to be paroled, CONTACT arranges connections for the inmate. If a drug addict in Idaho needs to know where to get free counseling, CONTACT provides him with that information.

In June, CONTACT added a service for Lincoln's deaf community. The agency offers a telephone teletype system to the deaf.

"We are their voice," CONTACT employee, Connie McKee said.

CONTACT is a non-profit organization and supports itself through its commercial printing shop, Hill said.

The agency also occasionally receives federal government grants. However, Hill said CONTACT tries to avoid too much government assistance.

"We're non-threatening that way. We can make suggestions and referrals without them appearing to be commands."

"I think government agencies sometimes have that image problem."

Hill said he got the idea for forming the agency while doing some work at the Nebraska State Penitentiary for the Lincoln Chapter of Jaycees.

Hill said that prison officials couldn't answer many questions asked by inmates.

"This was because they couldn't get the information, not because they didn't know."

"Our ideas all belong to someone or some other group. We just make use of them."

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