Siren's readiness attests to continuing global fears

Twenty years old last month, our three air raid sirens may be heard again if public concern over military attacks prevails

By ANI PEDERIAN and PAUL DORSEY Herald Staff Writers

Twenty years ago last month, federal government authorities installed two high-tower air raid sirens in Georgetown and one in Acton. Although soundless for the past decade, they remain operative in the event of civil emergency. Still, few local residents and even municipal authorities are aware of the emergency measures program behind them.

- the local Red Cross chapter, which annually conducts mock disaster drills to prepare emergency services and the public for catastrophe, knew only that the sirens are a federal responsibility when contacted by The

- a spokesman in Mayor Pete Pomeroy's office was aware of the sirens' role but could offer little other

- officials at both schools in Georgetown where the small siren footings are adjacent to playgrounds said they know nothing about the warning systems; new Wrigglesworth School principal Tom Gibson has yet to acquaint himself with the sirens' location; George Kennedy School vice-principal Gary Batemen has been in town a year and a half but was unaware of the siren's presence near his school; Kennedy principal Jack Reed is a 25-year resident but was unaware whether the sirens still work.

The sirens at Kennedy and Wrigglesworth schools and outside the Heller plant on Acton's Eastern Avenue do indeed still work, according to those in charge. Major Ronald Lang, stationed at CFB Borden near Alliston as Ontario's "provincial warning officer", told The Herald that the sirens are tested annually - but silently.

sense of national shattered by the shipping of Soviet nuclear missiles to Cuban launching pads in 1960. North Americans 20 years ago readily accepted the federal defence ministry's plan to crect air raid sirens in communities across Canada. The ministry continues to maintain the sirens. Major Lang- said, with help from Ontario Hydro and Bell Canada.

"Prior to a testing, we notify local agencies that testing will take place, and we notify radio and television staff as well," Major Lang said.

The broadcast media are informed because they are an integral port of the warning system. Should the siren sound, people are advised to turn on their radios or TVs and listen for instructions.

Sonia Skil, assistant regional director of the department of emergency planning in Canada, said if the siren blows, it would be warning of a nuclear attack, indicating people should turn on their radio or TV for further instructions. "It doesn't warn people to

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Reprinted from The

Herald's Nov. 30, 1961, edi-

tion, a section of the editorial

page features a cartoon with

the "nuclear overkill"

monsters of Kennedy and

Kruschev. Below the cartoon, part of the paper's

series of informative articles about surviving the nuclear

holocaust. Twenty years

later, the mood of the super-

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take shelter or anything like that," Ms. Skil said.

She said the sirens were installed during the Cold War period when there was a lot of world tension over the possibility of another war.

It was also the time of the Bay of Pigs crisis when the Russians were moving missiles into Cuba, making the U.S. extremely tense about the situation so close to their border.

"At the time, the government in power found there was enough public concern that they took measures to be able to warn Canadians of the possible outbreak of hostility," Ms. Skil said.

"I've heard there's a possibility of using the sirens as attention getters during peacetime when help is needed for non-war situations," Ms. Skil said, "They may use the sirens as an alerting system for people in an area that's flooding or expecting an earthquake or other imminent disaster."

Being able to warn people before non-nuclear tragedy strikes would be a good use for the sirens, she added.

However, in big cities, there may be problems with hearing the sirens. Ms. Skil noted that people inside high rise buildings would find it difficult to hear them.

Who has the ultimate power to press the button to set the sirens screaming?

Ms. Skil said the provincial warning officer would be the

AS ONE DINOSAUR TO ANOTHER

Know the Facts About

Radioactive Fallout



Located on the east corner of the Howard Wrigglesworth Public School playground, the air raid siren installed in November, 1961, is maintained by the department of national defence with annual checks. Another one put up at the same time at George Kennedy Public School on Weber Drive, is also functional. Each can be heard up to one and a half miles away.

one to press the button, but he would be doing it on instruction from the prime minister on the advice of the military, NORAD and NATO.

Besides the fact that you may not hear the siren blow because you're inside a high rise, you may not hear the siren because you're out of reach of its sound waves. They may not be loud enough to reach you in the country.

Major Lang sald the ones in Halton Hills can reach one and a half miles. That leaves the people in the countryside out of touch in the event of an

emergency. "The theory seems to be that in the event of a nuclear war. there would be a period of increased tension in the world leading into it, which would

give governments enough time to make the public aware and prepared for it," Ms. Skil said. In November, 1961, The Herald began an eleven-part series on how private citizens

could prepare for nuclear war. "Many hundreds of thousands of Canadians who would otherwise perish could survive a nuclear war if preparations were made," Bruce McGregor, then Halton's emergency measures organization co-ordinator, pointed out.

at that time. The Herald reported that planning boards were being set up by the emergency measures organization in Halton, and training courses opened to the

"The question asked by many Halton residents is, if a bomb is dropped on Hamilton.

Reagan deserves our thanks, councillor says

Ward 4 Coun. Mike Armstrong failed Monday to have town council act on two resolutions from other municipalities regarding different types of nuclear power. Although council decided to receive and file the recommendations, Coun. Armstrong said he supported a resolution from the township of Greenock in Bruce County applauding the provincial government for using nuclear energy to make the province more energy self-sufficient. However, he called a resolution from the city of Welland endorsing balanced nuclear disarmament between the USSR and the U.S. "ridiculous". Instead, he suggested, council should circulate a resolution "thanking" American president Ronald Reagan for beefing up U.S. defence systems which had lagged behind their Soviet counterparts during the Carter administration.

Breast cancer study

A national breast screening study is being held at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto to determine if screening by mammography can reduce death from breast cancer in women 40 and over. If you are a woman between 40 and 50 years of age; if you have not had a mammogram in the past year; if you have not had breast cancer; if you're not pregnant, then you can help by participating in this screening. Call 877-1124 and the Halton Hills Unit of the Cancer Society will arrange your appointment.

The Order of St. John has a history of helping the sick and wounded that dates back nearly nine centuries, to the Crusades. St. John Ambulance is a non-profit, public service organization that operates throughout Canada.

All photos rejected for the

House Sol exhibition can be

reclaimed at the Camera

Exchange from Jan. 18 to 23.

Get a receipt at the shop if

you'd like the organizers to

hold responsibility for lost or

damaged property.

Deadline for first juried photo exhibit Jan. 9

for sale, with a retail price

written on the back along

with the photographer's name, address and phone

number and any pertinent

information about the photo

itself. The dealer's commis-

sion will amount to one-

third of the retail selling

Area shutterbugs have until Jan. 9 to enter up to four photographs in Halton Hills' first juried exhibition, to be held at Gallery House Sol in Georgetown.

House Sol proprietor John Sommer, Halton Camera Exchange owner Peter Moss and local arts patron Bruce Harding will adjudicate the work on display at the Charles Street gallery next Feb. 20 through March 11.

Any Halton Hills resident can participate by bringing no more than four and no fewer than two photographs to Halton Camera Exchange on James Street in a sealed envelope marked "Photo Art". Entry deadline is Jan.

Entries must be no smaller than five by seven inches and no larger than 16 by 20 inches. They should not be framed, but mounted on white board with a threeinch margin. The photos must be signed in pencil by the photographer on the white board at the lower right corner. Polarold shots will not be accepted.

All photographs must be

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Kinsmen Club of Georgetown will we be affected by radioactive follout and if so, to what extent?" The Herald asked at

(It answers that wind direction is a chief factor in danger from fallout. If the wind is blowing south or west, Halton won't be too hadly affected." However, If the wind was blowing north, Halton residents would come under a heavy rain of fallout.)

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The Herald explained the

three types of warning signals

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Church of the Lutheron Hour

11:00 a m.

meaning an attack is possible or radicactive fallout from an attack elsewhere is expected. Hearing the Alert signal, residents are supposed to turn on their radio and proceed with household preparations.

the strens would emit. The

"Alert" signal is a steady note

for three minutes or more,

The "Take Cover" signal is recognizable by a rising and falling note of the sirens for three minutes or more, meaning there is danger of an

immediate attack in the area. Residents are advised to take cover immediately and turn on

their radio to keep posted. The "All Clear" signal is given only on the radio and not by sirens, and is to be given only when the area was free from radioactive fallout or

attack for more than an hour. Householders are advised to have battery-powered radios to deal with such disaster, since the electrical power may have been cut off.

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