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## Metro

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### County to fake nuclear accident

Web posted Thursday, July 18, 2002

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By Louie Villalobos  
 Columbia County Bureau

It has never happened, but just in case a shipment of nuclear waste is involved in an accident while passing from Aiken County through the area, local authorities want to be prepared.

On Wednesday, Columbia County Emergency Services Director Pam Tucker held the first of three pre-planning meetings to organize an Oct. 24 Waste Isolation Pilot Plant transportation exercise, which will simulate what could happen if an accident occurs.

It will be the first such exercise held east of Texas and the first of several planned in Georgia, officials said.

"They asked for it," said Ron Macaluso, senior trainer for the pilot plant in Carlsbad, N.M. "We offer so many exercises a year, and Georgia wanted one."

Since March 9, 2001, nine shipments have traveled through the area on the way to Carlsbad from Savannah River Site. Since 1999, more than 1,000 shipments have been sent from five locations across the country.

Officials said no shipment has encountered significant problems.

Representatives from several local and state agencies attended the session Wednesday.

Among the things decided was the location of the exercise - Wrightsboro Road and John Deere Parkway, just outside of Grovetown.

The scenario will consist of a "TRUPACT-II" transport vehicle traveling west on Interstate 20 with two loaded waste containers.

After being rerouted to Wrightsboro Road to avoid a car accident on I-20, it will be hit by a bus load of chemicals used to make methamphetamines, sending a waste container into the road and causing several injuries.

Workers from at least 12 agencies will treat injuries, clean the area of hazardous material and keep the public informed.

"We will be better able to respond, our plans will be strengthened, and overall, our community will be safer once we get done with this," Mrs. Tucker said.

Since the pilot plant program began in 1999, Mr. Macaluso said, there have been 22 training exercises to give responders a chance to practice their classroom training in a controlled field environment.

"This is one of the hardest hazardous material to train for," Mr. Macaluso said. "But it's out there."

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Nine shipments of waste have been transported from SRS since July 15. Shipments will take place the following dates in August:

Aug. 3

Aug. 10

Aug. 17

Aug. 19

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