INVESTIGATING THE KNOWLEDGE AND PREPAREDNESS OF PROXIMAL RESIDENTS TO A GENERAL-EMERGENCY EVENT AT THE KOEBERG NUCLEAR POWER STATION

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Ward 23 in the City of Cape Town South Africa is situated within 16 km of Koeberg Nuclear Power Station (KNPS). Massive investments were made to provide the 13 800 residents of Ward 23 with information on emergency preparedness and evacuation procedures in case of a general-emergency event at KNPS. However, it is not known whether these efforts to inform and prepare the proximal residents for a general emergency have been effective or not.

The objective of this study was to investigate the level of knowledge of and preparedness for an emergency exhibited by residents of Ward 23. Data was collected through the distribution of semi-structured questionnaires to 204 residents at the study site to ascertain their views on the provision and accessibility of emergency information and to find out whether they utilised this information to prepare themselves.

The results revealed that the majority of interviewed residents had very poor knowledge concerning emergency procedures, and few had made any effort to prepare themselves. The majority of better-informed and prepared residents tended to reside closer to KNPS. The poor levels of knowledge and preparedness are attributed to residents’ lack of awareness concerning the availability of information, misconceptions regarding a nuclear hazard and a general emergency event or a lack of incentive to inform themselves due to a perceived high sense of security and the improbability of such an event occurring. To improve resident knowledge and preparedness, efforts should be made to advertise the availability and importance of such emergency information and enhance incentives for residents to inform themselves.