

Fallout 'last worry' in nuclear war

By LOUISE WRIGHT

Radioactive fallout will be the least of New Zealanders worries after a nuclear war.

The Planning Council study titled "New Zealand After Nuclear War" was released today and revealed the aftermath of a northern hemisphere nuclear war would be more disastrous than nuclear fallout.

Head researcher Wren Green said radioactive fallout did not spread

evenly over the world as commonly thought.

New Zealand would only get a small amount of fallout because of weather patterns.

Our biggest problem would be coping with social chaos after a war between the superpowers.

"It is very important that people know that we would be likely to survive a nuclear war and therefore we would have to face some very grim prospects," Dr Green said.

In the first week after nuclear war, there would be "severe psychological pressures", the study says.

"The destruction of so much humanity, the deaths of millions of people in combatant countries and the abrupt loss of ties with people in other countries would overwhelm many with traumatic feelings of loss and dislocation."

Problems would occur in the health system because New Zealand depends on overseas imports for most of its drugs and medical equipment.

The loss of virtually all medicines would begin to affect diabetics, asthmatics and people with other chronic illnesses.

As vaccines ran out, diphtheria, tetanus, measles, polio and tuberculosis would reach epidemic proportions again.

Transport would be severely restricted as diesel and aviation fuel ran out. Petrol supplies would be rationed and only a small number of cars would be on the road.

Cars would break down

and could not be repaired as irreplaceable parts like batteries, spark plugs and tyres wore out.

There would be no export markets and primary industries like farming and forestry would be curtailed.

Dr Green said up to 40% of the population could expect to lose their jobs if there was no exporting to the northern hemisphere.

The study recommends the Government, health authorities and financial organisations begin contingency planning to deal with the aftermath of nuclear war.

It also suggests a public education programme be set up to inform people about the effects of nuclear war on New Zealand.

● Chernobyl heat linkers. — A6