

Official Calms Utah Fears on '55 A-Blasts

Every possible precaution will be taken by the Atomic Energy Commission to prevent inconvenience or danger to the public during nuclear tests beginning next month at the Nevada Proving Grounds, a representative of the commission said Thursday in Salt Lake City.

New procedures will be followed to minimize blast effects in the immediate vicinity of the tests, and to reduce the fall-out of radioactive material from the atomic clouds resulting from the explosions, which was the chief concern of Utah residents in the tests two years ago, it was explained by Dr. Alvin C. Graves, scientific adviser on the tests.

The tests are scheduled to start the middle of February, and because of greater precautions necessitating more postponements, will likely continue longer than those of two years ago, which were in progress from March 17 to June 6, he said.

"Preventing excessive fall-out is first of all a matter of preventing dirt from the ground becoming mixed in the atomic cloud," he said. "This time we will use as many air bursts as possible, and for the other explosions will place the nuclear devices on 500-foot towers, higher than have ever been used before."

Commission scientists also have conducted a number of experiments

on stabilizing the earth beneath the towers. They are even considering the creation of small lakes of water under the towers, which is no mean feat in a desert area.

The atomic blasts will be set off only under these favorable conditions, there will be a whole new set of improved weather forecasting procedures. This will mean better observations, closer and more frequent contact between weather observers at the test site and those in key cities throughout the west, and an increased number of "wind runs," or the testing of wind direction through liberation of balloons into the air.

The atomic devices will be exploded on weather forecasts received only one hour earlier, instead of 12 to 15 hours earlier, as was done two years ago, Dr. Graves said.

As part of the public protection program a wide area around the test site will be divided into zones, in each of which there will be a representative of the AEC to keep the people informed on all developments. In Utah these representatives will be stationed at St. George, Cedar City and Beaver, all of them in radio contact with the test site. The Radiobiology Laboratory at the University of Utah will be supplied necessary information by telephone.

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