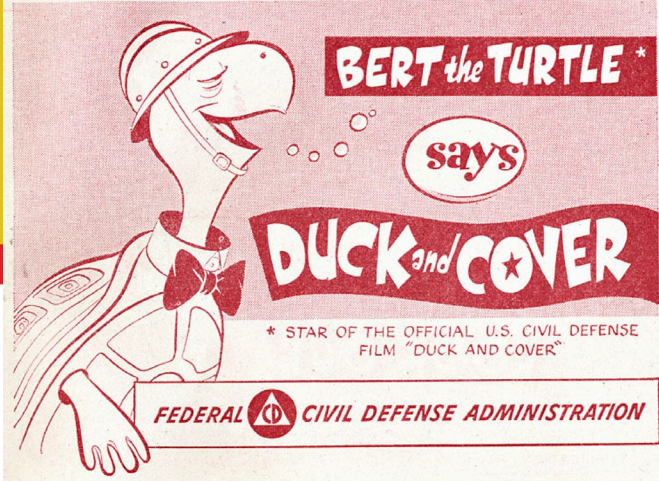


The Challenges and Opportunities of Civil Defense Messaging Today

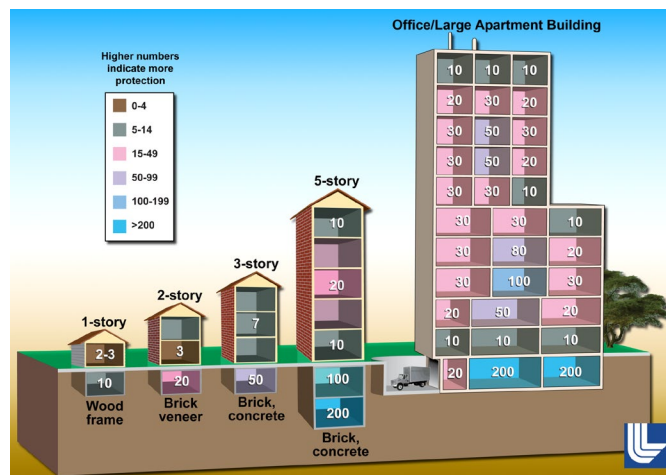
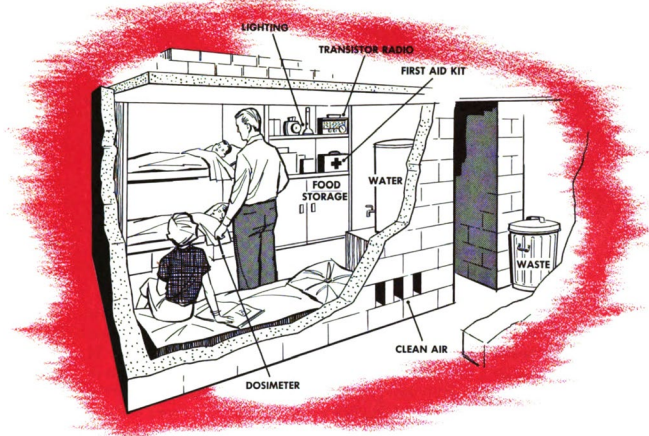
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CIVIL DEFENSE: HISTORICAL

US Civil Defense efforts can be *roughly* categorized by decade:

- 1950s: **"Duck and Cover"**: urban shelter from bombers
- 1960s: **"Fallout shelter"**: suburban fallout mitigation
- 1970s: **"What's the point?"**: decline in political support
- 1980s: **"All-hazards"**: de-emphasizing nukes in emergency planning
- 1990s: **"Thank God that's over with"**: Civil Defense as Cold War relic/object of fun
- 2000s: **"Axis of Evil"**: mitigating nuclear terrorism/rogue state threats



CIVIL DEFENSE: TODAY



Multiple plausible categories for a nuclear detonation on US soil

- Nuclear terrorism; pariah state (North Korea); even nuclear-armed major states (Russia, China)

Strong research program by US government into CD planning

- Good indications that what civilians do after a detonation will have a very large impact on the number of preventable casualties
- Studies assume a high degree of **civilian compliance** with messaging after detonation

Some messaging about nuclear risk hazards before detonation exists

- *Most* focused on individual detonations
- Our research suggests that almost none of this has penetrated into target populations
- *Informal* indications from practitioners that this is a political “hot potato” and so they are required to tread very carefully regarding public discussion
- Civil Defense as an idea highly politicized, viewed as discredited by most people

= The US does not really have anything like a coherent Civil Defense program, and its population is not at all prepared for a nuclear detonation

CHALLENGES



Civil Defense has a *horrible* reputation amongst Americans

- Most view it as *discredited*, *propaganda*, and *disingenuous*
- Complicated by a post-Vietnam, post-Watergate skepticism in government

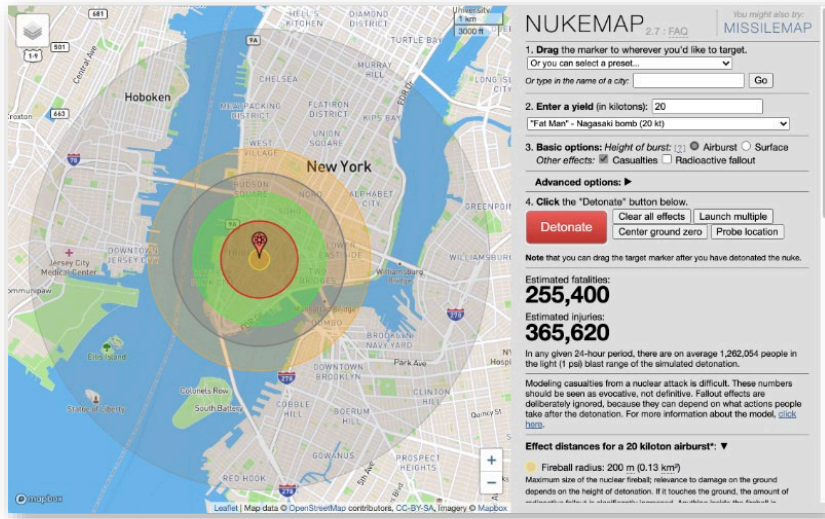
Cold War-era Civil Defense messaging has a *very mixed legacy*

- Faced resistance even in its time, became a subject of unending mockery
- US government has an apparent inability to tell people that many of them are likely to die no matter what = reduces credibility
- Most Cold War messaging had almost no research into its effectiveness *before* it was deployed, only sporadic research into its effectiveness *after* it was deployed

Most Americans don't worry about nuclear detonations... until they suddenly do (crisis moments)

- Common response: "What can we do? We can't do anything!"
- In an actual nuclear detonation, unclear what the response would be — but would probably be far from ideal situation
- Very hard to get Americans, esp. young Americans, to take this seriously when *outside* of a crisis

OPPORTUNITIES



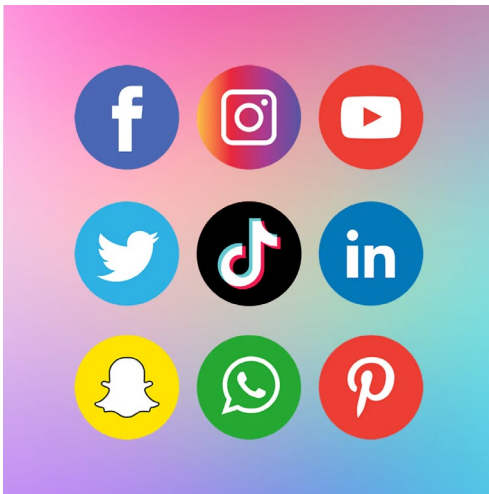
Crisis moments *do* provoke interest in the subject, and that interest *can* translate into longer-term engagement

- So fortunately or not, we've had a lot of crises, and will probably have more, and so the awareness/salience of this issue has increased, and the opportunities for communication have increased

Because they aren't thinking about them that much, younger Americans don't have *strong* opinions about nuclear weapons

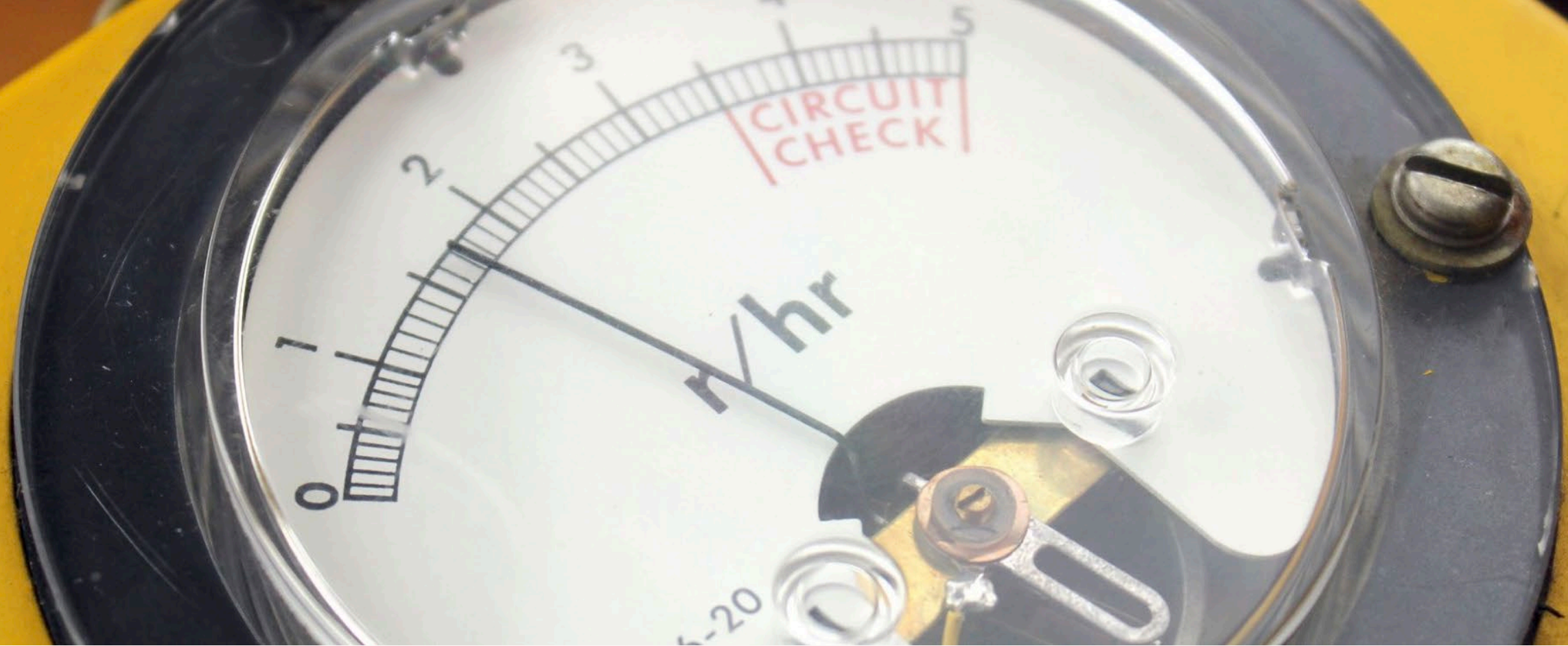
- Which means that you have to work less hard to overcome misconceptions or myths than you would otherwise — the "first" opinion is usually the strongest
- Many possibilities for effective "messengers" *other than* the US government, pamphlets, etc.
- Difficulty, of course, is that while the bandwidth has increased exponentially, so has the competition for attention

Personalizing the threat of nuclear weapons may also increase American's involvement/investment in nuclear issues in general



WHAT MIGHT BE DONE?

- Our research suggests that there may be ways to **leverage new media engagement** to community these issues to the “next generation” of Americans (e.g. Millennials and younger)
- Civil Defense techniques of **embodying** threat response (“Duck and Cover”) and **infrastructure** identification (fallout shelters) have been used successfully to communicate about other kinds of threats, and may be more important than just “messaging”
- As the number of nuclear crises in the 2010s-2020s likely increases, there may be **more opportunities** to find ways to reintroduce ideas from Civil Defense that will not be instantly rejected
- To do this may require the government/military to **engage with partners in academia, think tanks, and so on**, rather than do this themselves
- These efforts should be supported by **robust research** both before and after crises, so that their effectiveness or lack thereof can be more readily understood



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