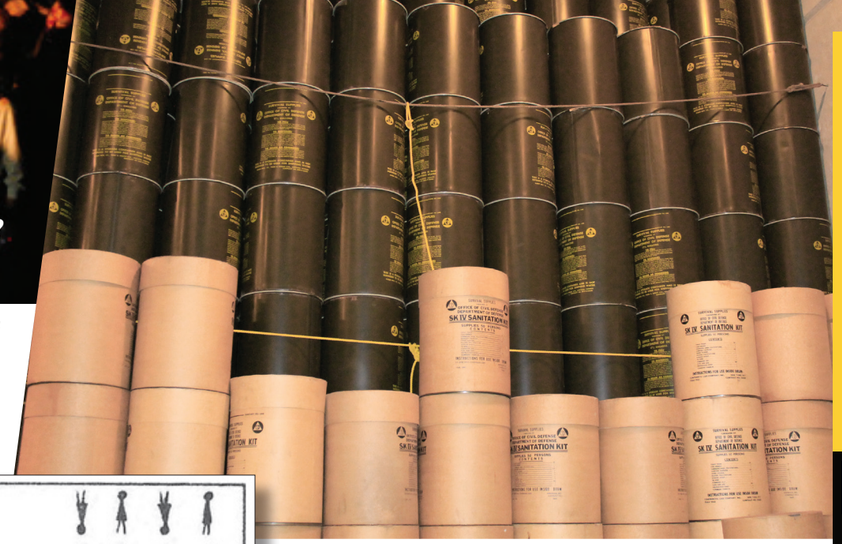

You've thought about where to go in a
ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE
But what about a nuclear attack?

Zombies. They're at your door.

Sure, this time it's just trick or treaters. BUT...
What would you do if it were really zombies? Where would you go?
What supplies would you need? Where would you use the bathroom?
How would you get food or water and where would you sleep?

In the 1960s, the Office of Civil Defense, with help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other Federal agencies led an effort to answer this question. But, instead of zombies, the threat was from a potential nuclear disaster.



These barrels are stored in the Gavins Point Dam Powerhouse and contain sanitation kits for people who might seek shelter at the dam. (Photo by Eileen L. Williamson)

In December 1962, fallout shelter identification signs like this one were placed at 18 buildings in Yankton, S.D. including Yankton State Hospital and Gavins Point Dam. The shelter signs were placed on buildings which had been determined to provide acceptable protection from radioactive fallout.

Sleeping in Fallout Shelters

Sleeping in a fallout shelter would be a challenge. Sleeping arrangements would vary from shelter to shelter depending on the space available, sleeping area's location, available beds and bedding, and even how many people would be in the shelter.

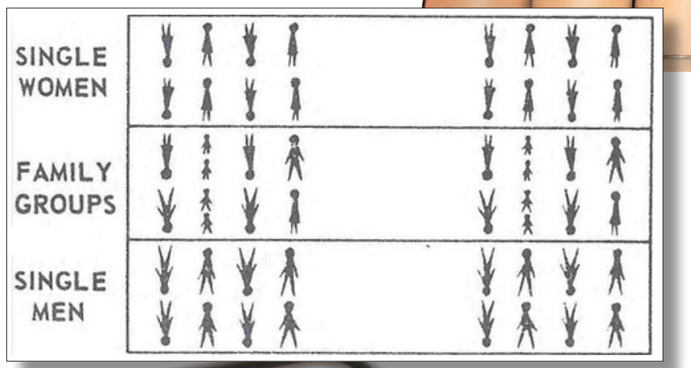
Cots like the one you see here, could provide the most comfortable sleeping arrangements for shelterees.

This U.S. Army-issue cot is one of many distributed to dams and powerplants along the Missouri River.

Each person coming into the shelter would be assigned a bedding box containing a pillow, blanket, sleeping bag, sheets, towel, wash cloth, laundry bag and a flashlight.

The Department of Defense Shelter Management Textbook offered some tips for sleeping in a shelter

- Sleep times - everyone sleep at once or in shifts
- How to arrange people - separating single men and women while families stay together
- How to position people in bunks.



Medical Supplies

Medical care would have been a critical concern in fallout shelters. In the Shelter Management Textbook an entire chapter was devoted to medical care. Not only would the shelter manager be worried about people entering the shelter ill or injured, but also illness spreading throughout the shelter.

The Federal Government provided licensed fallout shelters with medical kits. There were two basic kits: Kit A was for smaller shelter with up to 65 people, and Kit C was for larger shelter with up to 325 people.

The Government purchased and distributed more than 444,000 of the 2 kinds of kits. This would have served up to 50,000,000 people in shelters and cost nearly $22 million.

Most medical kits, including those at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers powerplants, have been discarded.

The supplies in this display were part of a variety of these kits, including one field medical kit. (Photo by Eileen L. Williamson)

Sanitation in Fallout Shelters

Sanitation is something you probably take for granted. A quick flush and it's gone. Even portable toilets are hauled away by someone. But, imagine being in a crowded shelter for a long time with nothing but a plastic-lined cardboard barrel for a toilet. Probably not fun!

Keeping a shelter clean was more important than just looking or smelling nice. It was vital for preventing and controlling disease, as well for the morale of the shelter occupants.

The Government distributed 1,348,000 sanitation kits to shelters across the country.

Recommendations included placing toilets in a separate room, near ventilation and away from food and water. The kits included instructions for how to build partitions.

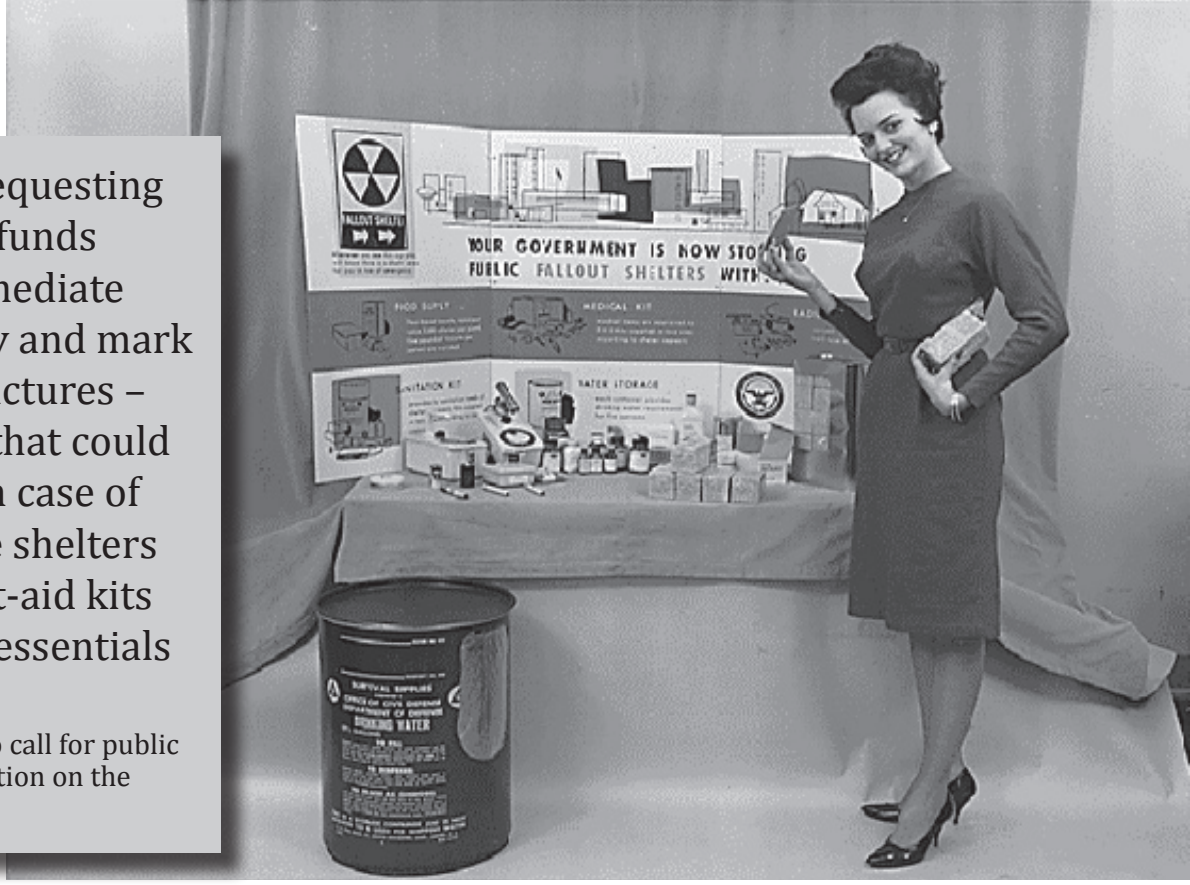
Similar to beds, how and where to place toilets depended upon the shelter itself, number of occupants, whether separate male and female facilities were needed, and if there were medical requirements for separate toilets to prevent spreading disease.

Cardboard sanitation drums contained likely items such as toilet tissue, hand cleaner, sanitary napkins, and sanitary chemicals. The drums also contained cups, a siphon spout for water drums, the all important toilet seat, and oddly, only one pair of disposable gloves.

The containers did not include soap, razors, and toothbrushes. While people coming to the shelter may have brought these items with them, shelters with a limited water supply may have restricted people from using them.

"Tomorrow, I am requesting of the Congress new funds for the following immediate objectives: to identify and mark space in existing structures – public and private – that could be used for fall-out in case of attack; to stock those shelters with food, water, first-aid kits and other minimum essentials for survival…"

President John F. Kennedy to call for public shelters in his report to the nation on the Berlin Crisis on July, 25, 1961



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also conducted cost studies for emergency headquarters; determined local capabilities to quickly increase public shelters and more. (Department of the Army Photo)

USACE supports establishing Civil Defense Shelters

Shortly after World War II, which ended after the U.S. dropped the first nuclear bomb in Japan, growing tensions with the Soviet Union led to President John F. Kennedy's call to provide shelters for the public in the event of an enemy dropping a nuclear bomb on the U.S.

The task of identifying shelters, among other tasks, fell upon the Office of Civil Defense, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks. Their mission was to identify structures that would be able to house people seeking shelter and reduce exposure to radiation if a nuclear disaster were to occur.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also developed special techniques for processing shelter data including developing scientific methods to evaluate potential shelters. USACE trained 1,500 architect-engineers to conduct surveys while managing 500 contracts to conduct the surveys.

While USACE was busy conducting shelter surveys, other federal agencies begin stocking the shelters. The Department of Agriculture stockpiled shelters with food, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was in charge of medical stockpiles.

Once the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined a structure was a suitable fallout shelter, it was licensed, publicly posted, stocked with food, water, medical equipment and radiation monitoring kits funded by the Federal Government.

By 1966, more than 137 million community shelters were identified and ready for people in an attack. These spaces included the powerplant structures at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dams along the Missouri River.

The Fallout Shelter Program continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1972, overall management of the Civil Defense Program was passed to the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency. The program was finally incorporated into the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1979.

The Federal Building in downtown Omaha, Neb. was among several locations to store supplies. (Department of the Army Photo)