

Fury over flooded village

DEFENCE chiefs hit back last night after a top-secret nuclear base was accused of sacrificing a village during a freak storm.

But furious families still plan to sue the Ministry for repairs when two million gallons of flood water crashed down on their homes.

The row broke after drainage systems at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment failed to cope with storms which lashed Aldermaston, Berkshire.

Two lakes in the complex overflowed, threatening to flood secret bunkers and an underground railway which takes

A-base denies blame for plight of families

By CHESTER STERN
and JOHN QUINN

experimental warheads to a missile-building plant at nearby Burghfield.

And overspill outlets could not handle the 'tidal wave' of water which usually drains into a lake on the Blue Circle concrete firm's estate.

Families believe AWRE averted

a catastrophe by opening sluice gates — deliberately sacrificing the village.

As a result, Aldermaston was deluged and 30 families had to be evacuated.

Failed

Pictures taken yesterday by The Mail on Sunday show the sluices still propped open with wood.

Yet the Defence Ministry has

denied the villagers' allegations. A spokesman said: 'AWRE staff made no change to the outflow from these ponds. It would have just made them overflow sooner. But they did overflow and some water found its way down the hill.'

Michael Parker, Blue Circle's estates manager said: 'A great volume of water arrived from nowhere in our lake, which is fed from AWRE. The culvert under the road in the village could not cope with the extra pressure.'

Bob Jones, 55, was in his garden when the flood uprooted a 70 ft chunk of 7 ft high brick wall in Aldermaston's main street.

'The wall started moving. As it crumbled, I ran. I'm lucky I wasn't washed away — the water was surging up to 5 ft deep.'

Then Mr Jones's 60 ft garden wall was smashed down, causing £2,000 worth of damage to his Audi car and hurling bricks 30 ft into a neighbour's garden.'

Hours later the water was still 2 ft deep and the emergency services evacuated him, along with his wife Anne, daughter Sandra and 91-year-old mother-in-law Jean Gow.

Cascade

Mrs Jones said: 'We're lucky to come out of it alive.'

Martin Bartlett, landlord of the Hind's Head pub, was at his window at the bottom of a hill when the water cascaded down into the pub.

'I looked up, saw this mountain of water and thought it was a tidal wave,' he said.