

By Michael Hirsley

TWENTY LARGE cardboard boxes containing tins filled with 50,000 crackers are piled in a small basement room in City Hall.

Every Tuesday at 10:30 a. m. 90 fire department sirens sound throughout the city.

The sirens and crackers remain as evidence that Chicago is prepared for a nuclear attack, whether its residents are or not.

IN THE 1950s, when the civil defense concept was initiated, schools conducted air raid drills in which pupils huddled under their desks in fetal positions. They were reminded to shield their eyes from the blinding light that would accompany the H-bomb explosion even miles away.

With that sort of drilling, the siren at 10:30 a. m. Tuesdays would stir brief anxieties among many Chicagoans.

Just how many was demonstrated in the panic that followed Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn's decision to sound the alarms as an unscheduled moment of tribute to the pennant-winning White Sox baseball team in 1959.

FEAR OF THE big bomb has become mostly a bad memory. But civil defense is still with us.

And, according to Fire Marshal George Schuller, acting coordinator of Chicago's civil defense program; and John Fascia, regional director of the Emergency Services and Disaster Agency which has replaced the civil defense program in suburban Cook County, their biggest problem is lack of public awareness of what they are doing.

About the only reaction the sirens get these days is from people who have told Schuller they set their watches by it.

And city pedestrians seldom notice the signs—three upside down yellow triangles in a black circle—marking most buildings where the city's 1,712 fallout shelters are housed, complete with crackers, medical kits, sanitation facilities, 17½-gallon drums to be filled with water in the event the attack signal is sounded, and geiger counters to determine when an "all clear" may be sounded.

MAINTAINING THOSE shelters is only a small part of what their offices do, said Schuller and Fascia.

Some 45 civil defense volunteers in Chicago work out of a fire station at 1244 N. Wells St., under Chief Richard Rourke. They assist in fire-fighting and traffic control and cleanup in emergency situations, Schuller said. Some 700 city employees are also listed as part-

time civil defense volunteers, he said.

Although the city's civil defense budget of \$180,000 this year includes no federal funding, most of the equipment used by the team has been bought with federal and local matching funds.

THE LATEST PIECE of equipment is a triage truck and van loaded with such supplies as 100 stretchers and 150 blankets which can be taken to field emergencies, Schuller said.

Fascia's office is part of a statewide network.

"We have practically no budget [\$82½ million federal funds nationwide, less than \$1 million for Illinois which is matched 50-50 by local funds], but we have 30,000 volunteers statewide," Fascia said.

"Many of them, particularly those outside Chicago, take the exact same training that police and firemen do. In smaller communities, they are empowered by local authorities to do the same work police and firemen do."

IN HIS one-county region, which includes half the state's population, Fascia has about 10,000 volunteers. He said there are some 3,500 fallout shelters in suburban Cook County, but had no accurate up-to-date number, noting that buildings housing shelters sometimes are torn down.

Fifty-six Cook County communities, about half the total in the county, have federally approved emergency service programs. Half of those 56 receive some federal funding through his office, Fascia said.

He said his office's greatest accomplishments in the last year — directing federal and state assistance in evacuation, cleanup, and providing of food and medical supplies to tornado-stricken Franklin Park and Lemont Township — have nothing to do with the "nuclear bomb image we're trying to shed."

Fascia and his secretary are the only full-time employees in the county program with headquarters in Western Springs. Until the image is changed, he said, "we apparently aren't going to get much money."

DUE TO LACK of funds, he said, supplies such as crackers stored in fallout shelters have not been replenished or changed.

Sen. William Proxmire [D., Wis.] has called for abolition of the civil defense program because it is "the biggest boondoggle in government. In a nuclear age, there is literally no place to hide."

A couple of places were one might try to hide in Chicago — shelters in the basements of City Hall and an Illinois Bell Telephone Co. equipment office at 509 N. Dearborn St. — were