

Defence nuclear sector safety concerns at AWE Aldermaston and other sites

Nuclear Free Local Authorities

Oxford Town Hall

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What we will talk about



- Recent incidents at defence nuclear sites.
- Office for Nuclear Regulation 'special measures' at the Atomic Weapons Establishment.
- Key regulatory issues for the defence nuclear programme.
- Campaign agenda.

Devonport Dockyard



12 March 2014:

- **Test Variant Sting Ray torpedo “inadvertently jettisoned” onto wharf during training exercise on board HMS Argyll.**

Vulcan Naval Reactor Test Establishment, Dounreay



6 March 2014:

- ✦ **Defence Secretary announced breach in test reactor fuel element cladding had been discovered in January 2012.**
- ✦ **Operational consequences for submarine reactors unclear.**
- ✦ **Unplanned refuelling for HMS Vanguard in 2015.**
- ✦ **Scottish Government not told.**

Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations, Derby



July 2014:

- ✦ **ONR Quarterly Report reveals power outage during reporting period which affected on-site services and required muster of site personnel.**

28 September 2014:

- ✦ **Rolls-Royce fined £200,000 in Leicester Crown Court following loss of a radioactive test source and exposure of personnel to high radiation doses.**

Atomic Weapons Establishment

21 February 2014:

- ✦ **ONR announces AWE has failed to comply with instructions to treat 1000 drums of intermediate level radioactive waste.**

May 2014:

- ✦ **ONR Quarterly Report reveals investigation into defective fire alarm systems at AWE sites.**

9 July 2014:

- ✦ **Environment Agency inspection reveals non-compliance with waste management requirements.**

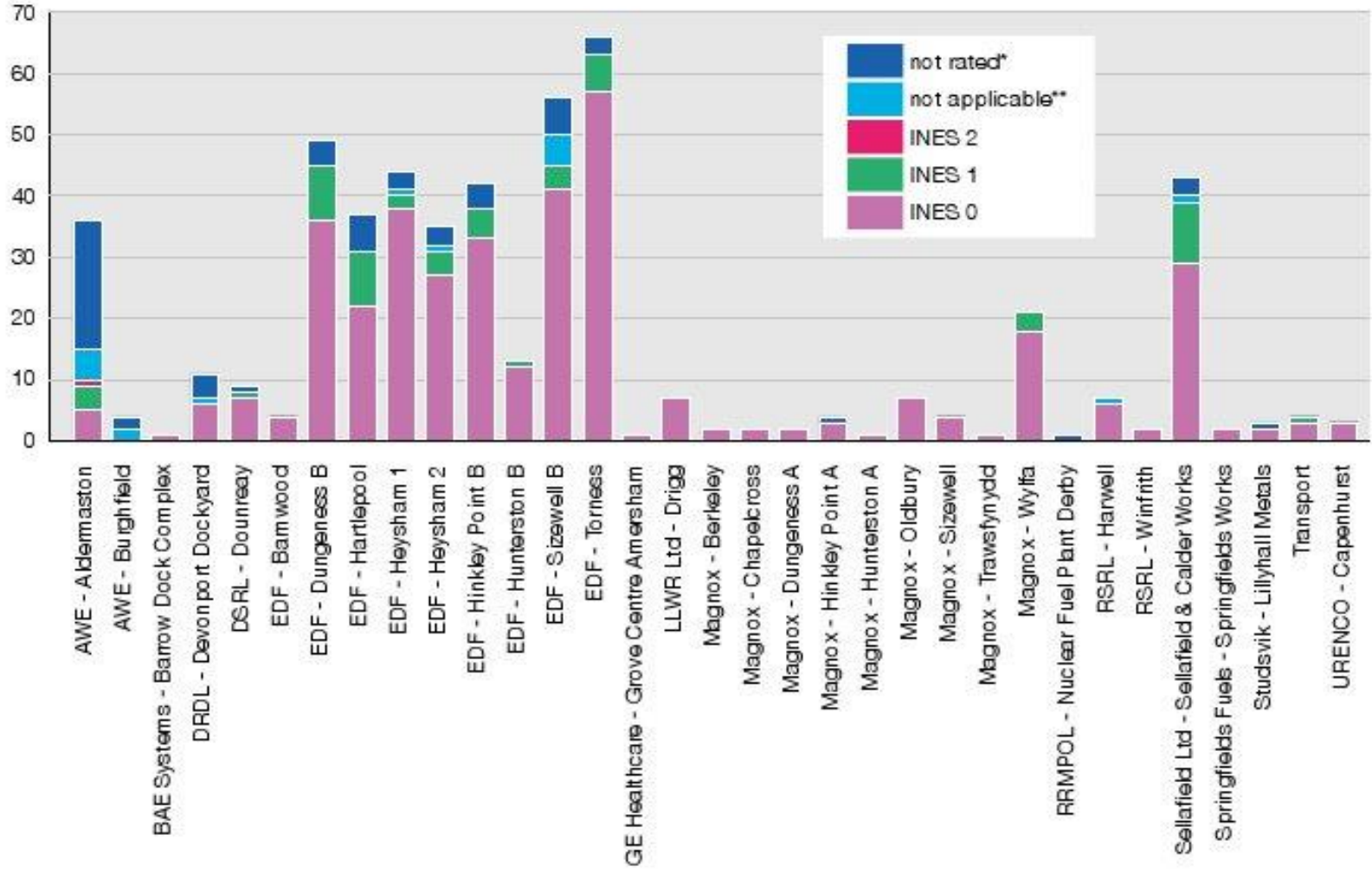


Site incidents 2010-13



- Highest number of incidents at operating reactor sites, Sellafield, and AWE Aldermaston.
- Much lower level of reporting at waste storage sites, smaller sized sites, and sites where there are lower levels of operational activity.

Number of events reported to ONR by site: 2010 - 13



ONR Regulatory Priorities 2014



ONR Annual Report, July 2014:

- ✦ **Priority 1: Sellafield decommissioning.**
- ✦ **Priority 2: AWE Aldermaston, Devonport Dockyard, Dounreay, and four other civil sites.**
- ✦ **Priority 3: Barrow, Derby, Rosyth, and 26 other civil sites.**

ONR Regulatory Priorities



- ✦ **Priority 1 and 2 sites receive enhanced regulatory attention because of:**
 - radiological hazard on the site
 - safety performance
- ✦ **Priority 1 sites:**
 - Enhanced regulatory attention for at least five years.
- ✦ **Priority 2 sites:**
 - Enhanced regulatory attention for around two years.

AWE Aldermaston: Priority 2 attention



- ✦ **Ageing facilities.**
- ✦ **Most serious safety incident recorded in 2013: A45 corrosion.**
- ✦ **Ongoing series of safety shortfalls.**
- ✦ **“Safety cases do not meet expectations”**
- ✦ **Major new build programme.**
- ✦ **Performance remains steady – not improving.**

Factors contributing to poor performance



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator Annual Report 2012-3:

- ✦ Resources and suitably skilled personnel.
- ✦ Organisational change.
- ✦ Ageing plant and facilities.
- ✦ Quality of product and control of work.
- ✦ Safety management arrangements.

Recurring themes: AWE fire, August 2010



Fire in explosives handling area.

HSE investigation found:

- ✦ Staff not trained for the job.
- ✦ Instructions were not followed and safety cases were not complied with.
- ✦ Management cost-cutting on protective equipment.
- ✦ Explosives safety neglected compared to nuclear safety.

Recurring themes: Pochin Report, 1978 Pochin Report, 1978



- ✦ Investigation following contamination of workers.
- ✦ Inadequate numbers of Health Physics staff.
- ✦ Inadequate staff training.
- ✦ Safety disciplines were not followed by staff.
- ✦ Standards were particularly low in solid and liquid waste treatment plants and laundry.

Deeper issues



- ✦ **Complexity of nuclear operations.**
- ✦ **Many defence sites not subject to independent regulation.**
- ✦ **Culture of secrecy remains: security often used as a pretext to avoid scrutiny.**
- ✦ **Scrutiny mechanisms ineffective:**
'PR approach', LLC, lack of reporting.



Campaign focus

- ✦ **Press for increased transparency and accountability – eg effective Local Liaison Committees.**
- ✦ **Press for more robust regulatory action.**
- ✦ **Press for MoD to enforce sanctions for poor performance – eg withdrawal of AWE operating contract.**
- ✦ **Exploit opportunities that Fukushima and new EU nuclear safety directive provide.**

Thank you friends.

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