



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information



## **NFLA / KIMO International Joint Media release - for release, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014 NFLA and KIMO call for urgent inquiry into Parida nuclear waste transport fire off the Moray Firth**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) and the marine issues local government group KIMO International today call for an urgent investigation and more formal inquiry into the overnight fire on board the ship 'Parida', containing radioactive waste from Dounreay bound for Belgium.

Last night, whilst travelling in stormy seas, a fire broke out on one of the funnels on the vessel, the 'Parida', leaving it drifting around seven miles off the Moray Firth. The Coastguard emergency towing vessel at Orkney was called out to assist it, but before it arrived on the scene the vessel owners had agreed a commercial tow from the 'Pacific Champion'. The fire has been extinguished and it appears no one was injured on the vessel. Aberdeen Coastguard confirmed that it is now under tow and was heading to the Cromarty Firth for a secure anchorage. The crew members of the 'Parida' would then decide whether to attempt to restart its engines.

As a precaution, 52 workers from the nearby Beatrice oil rig were evacuated by helicopter to RAF Lossiemouth. There may well have been concern that the vessel could collide with the oil rig, necessitating the precautionary measure. (1)

The vessel was transporting radioactive materials from Scrabster, near Dounreay to Antwerp in Belgium, where the material is to be stored. This waste shipment is part of a contract between Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd and the Belgian nuclear authority SCK/CEN. It will involve the repatriation of 123 stainless steel drums of nuclear fuel in solidified cement. Around 20 sea transports to Belgium are envisaged. (2)

NFLA and KIMO International agree with the reported comments of the Scottish Environment Minister Richard Lochhead to the BBC - that there needs to be a full review of the regulations around the transportation of radioactive waste by sea. This has been a long-standing policy of both organisations. It is even more prescient given that the NDA and Dounreay are pushing for the transportation of a significant amount of radioactive materials from Dounreay to Sellafield by sea. These measures have recently involved discussions between the NDA and NFLA / KIMO members Shetland Island Council and Western Isles Council.

It should be noted that, due to national cutbacks, there is only one emergency tug vessel covering the northern isles and the west of Scotland, based at Orkney, and this was called out to the incident. How long would it have taken the Orkney based vessel to have got to a similar incident of a Dounreay – Sellafield vessel if it was stricken off the Western Isles?

Both NFLA and KIMO remain opposed to the transportation of nuclear materials by sea, given the real problems that exist in the event of a major fire on board or collision with another vessel. Both organisations plan to write to the UK and Scottish governments, the nuclear regulator and the Transport Committees of the UK and Scottish Parliaments calling for an inquiry into this incident and the wider regulations covering the transportation of radioactive materials. The NFLA have already published a detailed report outlining its concerns in this area after a major fire involving the ship 'Atlantic Cartier' at Hamburg port. It also contained a significant amount of radioactive materials. (3)

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES**



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NFLA Chair, Councillor Mark Hackett said:

“I am extremely alarmed to hear of this incident. It confirms a long-held concern of NFLA that such vessels containing radioactive materials remain a major risk in the event of an accident on board, like this fire on the *Parida*. I urge the nuclear regulator, the UK and Scottish Governments and the Transport Committees to investigate this incident thoroughly and consider in much more detail the emergency arrangements and national regulations around such shipments.”

Councillor Norman McDonald, President of KIMO International said:

“KIMO International was established to bring coastal local authorities together to raise concerns of the dangers to the marine and coastal environment by the transport of dangerous goods by sea. I am very concerned about this incident which was serious enough to necessitate the evacuation of an oil rig. It also highlights again the real concerns of KIMO that there is only one emergency towing vessel for the Western Isles, Northern Scotland and the Northern Isles. I urge the safety authorities to consider this incident in detail and improve emergency plans for dealing with the transportation of nuclear materials by sea. Our coastal communities deserve a better emergency service in the event of serious incidents at sea, as this incident clearly emphasises.”

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 0161 234 3244 or Harriet Bolt, KIMO Secretary on 01595 744826.

Notes for editors:

- (1) BBC, 8th October 2014  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-29531395>
- (2) Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd, Dounreay News, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014  
<http://www.dounreay.com/news/2012-09-04/foreign-waste-is-collected-from-dounreay>
- (3) NFLA Policy Briefing 120, ‘Concerns over the transportation of nuclear materials by sea on ‘Roll on, Roll off’ vessels, the *Atlantic Cartier* fire emergency and wider issues for UK / Irish ports, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014  
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/briefings/A234\\_\(NB120\)\\_Marine\\_nuclear\\_transportation.pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/briefings/A234_(NB120)_Marine_nuclear_transportation.pdf)

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