



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 17th September 2013

NFLA holds important joint seminar on nuclear emergency planning and the safety of nuclear weapon convoys

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) is holding an important joint seminar on the issue of nuclear emergency planning and the safety of nuclear weapon road convoys in Glasgow City Chambers this Friday, September 20th. (1)

The seminar has been organised in co-operation with Nuclear Information Service (2), Nukewatch (3) and CND Scotland (4).

The seminar arises out of a number of articles that have occurred this summer in the media raising concerns over the safety of nuclear weapons convoys and nuclear emergency planning preparedness in general.

This includes the publication (through the Freedom of Information Act) of a post exercise report of 'Exercise Senator', a Ministry of Defence multi-agency exercise considering an incident scenario involving a weapons convoy. The exercise report raised some concerns around the timeliness of the emergency response and of the capability of the emergency services to respond to it (5). It raises wider concerns for the seminar's participating groups over the safety of the transportation of nuclear weapons by road from Aldermaston to Faslane and Coulport in the west of Scotland.

A second article raised concern over the amount, location and speed in deployment of potassium iodate tablets in the event of a wider radiation incident around the Torness civil reactor in East Lothian. Inquiries are still being made of appropriate agencies using the Freedom of Information Act (6).

Only yesterday, a train containing nuclear flasks was derailed close to Barrow. Fortunately the flasks were empty, but this is another example of the risks around the transportation of nuclear materials (7). Today also sees the trial of a new emergency text messaging system in Glasgow city centre, Leiston in Suffolk (close to the Sizewell reactor) and Easingwold, North Yorkshire (home of the UK Emergency Planning College), which could be potentially used for a future nuclear emergency (8).

Since the Fukushima disaster, government and the emergency responding agencies have been conducting a major review of emergency planning to extrapolate relevant learning points and assess the safety of the nuclear industry, as well as the arrangements to respond to the incident. Groups like the NFLA and the Nuclear Information Service have been representing national nuclear concerned groups in an ongoing dialogue with the UK Government and the nuclear regulatory agencies around improving openness and transparency in the area of nuclear emergency planning. This seminar therefore is an attempt to inform local authorities and concerned groups of some of the issues they have been raising.

The speakers at this seminar include:

- Rob Edwards, a freelance environmental journalist who regularly contributes to 'The Guardian' and 'The Herald' newspaper, and who published the articles on Exercise Senator and Torness noted above.
- Peter Burt, Director of NIS, who monitor the safety of the defence sector and raises concerns around defence nuclear emergency planning.

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- Jane Tallents, a Co-ordinator of the Scottish branch of Nukewatch, which monitors the regular nuclear weapon convoys that take place between Aldermaston and Faslane / Coulport.
- Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary, and a former local authority emergency planning officer, who has been liaising with government and the nuclear regulatory agencies over post Fukushima nuclear emergency planning.

The seminar is being hosted by Glasgow City Council and has been opened out to local authorities and interested local groups who want to understand more of the issues around this policy area.

NFLA Scotland Convenor, Councillor Bill Butler said:

"I am pleased that NFLA Scotland is hosting this important seminar which will consider the safety of nuclear weapons convoys passing on our motorway and road network and wider issues of concern around nuclear emergency planning. As we continue to hear of new dangers at the stricken Fukushima plant, local authorities need to know more about the emergency procedures for dealing with a radiation emergency here, whether it is a nuclear transport, or at a civil or defence nuclear facility. I am pleased many councillors, emergency planning officers and concerned groups are attending this seminar. With major ongoing cuts to all emergency responders, this is a timely opportunity to consider if there are any gaps to responding to such an incident in the UK."

Nukewatch's Jane Tallents added:

"Now that the Cold War is over and even the government admits that Britain faces no threat of attack from overseas, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that the risk of an accident involving the UK's own nuclear weapons poses a far greater threat to the public than any overseas enemy".

Ends

Further information - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary - 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196.

Notes to editors:

- (1) The flyer for the seminar is attached with this media release. It can be downloaded from the NFLA website:
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/events/NFLA_joint_seminar_September_flyer.pdf
- (2) Nuclear Information Service website: <http://nuclearinfo.org>
- (3) Nukewatch website: <http://www.nukewatch.org>
- (4) CND Scotland website: <http://www.banthebomb.org>
- (5) See NFLA / Nukewatch joint media release, 13th June 2013
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/news/NFLA_PR_NIS_Exercise_Senator.pdf
- (6) See Rob Edwards's website, 18th June 2013
<http://www.robedwards.com/2013/06/where-are-the-anti-radiation-pills-meant-to-prevent-cancers-no-one-will-say.html>
- (7) North West Evening Mail, 16th September 2013
<http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/nuclear-train-derails-between-barrow-and-roose-1.1084678>
- (8) Daily Mail Online, 17th September 2013
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2423046/Worried-nuclear-disaster-Get-warning-sent-mobile-Government-starts-trial-text-messaging-major-emergencies.html>

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