



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 14th September 2012

NFLA publishes emergency planning assessment of Fukushima and urges radical reform of UK nuclear emergency planning regulations

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) publishes today a detailed assessment of the key emergency planning issues that have come out of the Fukushima disaster and how these should be extrapolated for a UK context. It strongly advocates radical reform of the UK nuclear emergency planning regime, and particularly the Office for Nuclear Regulation's (ONR) REPPiR emergency planning guidelines (1).

The Policy Briefing has been developed by the NFLA Secretary, a former local authority emergency planning officer. It seeks to analyse the key reports and findings from the March 2011 Fukushima disaster in reference to improving the UK and international nuclear emergency planning regimes. The briefing focuses on the UK's main nuclear emergency planning guidelines – the Radiation Emergency Planning & Public Information (or REPPiR) Regulations 2001. The NFLA have met with DECC and ONR staff to discuss these concerns and are seeking to engage further with the emergency planning community over its report.

Key points made in the NFLA nuclear emergency planning report include:

- The Fukushima disaster was one of the worst nuclear disasters in the past 60 years. Though the natural disasters that befell north eastern Japan could not have been prevented, many of the dire consequences on the Fukushima Daiichi facility could have been alleviated by better pre-planning.
- The independent Japanese report on the disaster outlines a long list of serious failings which have contributed to significant environmental degradation, community dislocation, economic destruction and potential long-term health consequences for a large number of people in the vicinity of the stricken reactors. This report contains many learning points that should be extrapolated for consideration at the European and UK level.
- The ONR reports on the Fukushima incident and the findings of the European 'stress tests' on nuclear sites highlight a long list of additional issues that need to be considered for the improvement of nuclear safety plans and nuclear emergency plans across the UK civil and defence nuclear sector. An extensive review of nuclear emergency planning arrangements in the UK is taking place and its length suggests that significant improvements are being considered.
- The Fukushima incident highlights major complexities in the size of an evacuated area, and how to extend the area in the event of increased radiation contamination. The problem of dealing with self-evacuation complicates the matter even further.
- The concept of 'confinement' needs to be seriously reconsidered in the event of a prolonged nuclear incident like Fukushima. Large numbers of people were left indoors for as much as 10 days running out of food and fuel with only limited support from the emergency responding agencies.
- The UK's 'REPPiR' nuclear emergency planning regulations require a thorough review. The size of detailed emergency planning zones around a nuclear site, the availability of a large pool of suitably trained emergency responders to a nuclear incident, the serious problems and difficulties in 'extending' an evacuated area, the lack of 'live' exercises considering prolonged nuclear incidents, the content of public information and the provision of potassium iodide tablets are all questioned to be in need of reform following the learning points of the Fukushima incident.
- The radiation impacts and the effects on public health due to the failure of emergency preparedness and response in the Fukushima incident may lead to significant long-term problems for a large number of Japanese people. These need to be carefully considered by the public health agencies in the UK for parallel issues with the UK nuclear sector.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

- The NFLA are concerned what negative effect the severe trimming of emergency service and local authority budgets may be having on the local, regional and national emergency preparedness and response systems in the UK.

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

“This heavily researched report highlights to me the real need for radical change in the UK’s nuclear emergency planning arrangements. I believe there is a strong case for expanding detailed emergency planning zones around UK nuclear sites and for an extensive review of the ONR’s REPIR regulations. The NFLA believes Fukushima was a fundamental game-changer for nuclear emergency planning and urges the key agencies involved in emergency preparedness and emergency response to read this report and engage with groups like the NFLA to improve the UK nuclear emergency planning regime. Our report is also going to Local Authorities and Local Resilience Forums to encourage them to get more involved in the UK nuclear emergency planning review.”

Ends

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

Notes to editors:

- (1) The NFLA Policy Briefing is attached with this briefing and can be found on the NFLA website – <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info> in the ‘General Policy Briefings’ section.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES