



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014**

## **Sellafield partial closure – NFLA extremely concerned about ‘elevated’ levels of radioactivity on the site**

The NFLA is extremely concerned to hear that the Sellafield plant has had to be partially closed down due to a radiation alarm detecting ‘elevated levels’ of radioactivity. (1)

Sellafield has told its workers that only essential staff should come to work and that day personnel, agency staff and contractors have been told to stay at home. The incident has led to major traffic problems on the A595 outside the Sellafield site as workers turn around to go home.

The Sellafield site message to its staff notes:

"In response to an operational condition on the Sellafield Site a conservative and prudent decision has been taken, to operate the site at reduced manning levels, commensurate with safe operations. The decision to suspend day operations has taken with the safety and security of the workforce as a priority."

The message goes on to say:

"Levels of radioactivity detected are above naturally occurring radiation but well below that which would call for any actions to be taken by the workforce on or off the site." (2)

It is obviously too early to know the location and cause of this radiation incident and the Sellafield site owners are correct to make safety the defining issue for its staff and the public. However, this incident comes after a long and protracted level of severe criticism of the Sellafield site owners from the likes of the National Audit Office, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and the independent KPMG report for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

These reports criticised the Sellafield site for posing a “significant risk to people and the environment” because of the deteriorating conditions of radioactive waste storage facilities. The lack of progress exposed in the National Audit Office report prompted Margaret Hodge MP, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, to state that Sellafield posed an “intolerable risk” to the general public. (3)

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

“The decision to partially close the Sellafield site and reduce its normal operations for the day due to elevated levels of radioactivity has to be of concern for all worried about this ageing facility. I visited Sellafield a few months ago and was personally concerned about how decrepit some parts of the site looked some 25 years after my first visit. I urge a full and independent inquiry into the source of this radiation leak and, while I welcome initiating prompt emergency procedures on the site, this is another example of the ongoing danger of dealing with such sensitive and hazardous materials. The Sellafield site owners have received a torrent of criticism in the past year, all of which has been justified. This incident alone shows the need to get a grip of this complicated site containing high active radioactive waste.”

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 07771 930196.

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**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES**



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Notes for editors:

- (1) BBC News Online, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-25975785>
- (2) Statement published in the North West Evening Mail, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014  
<http://www.nwemail.co.uk/home/radiation-alarm-leads-nuclear-plant-to-suspend-operations-amid-safety-fears-1.1113621#>
- (3) Friends of the Earth Cumbria report 'Towards a Safe Cumbria', by the NFLA Policy Advisor Pete Roche, March 2013. This can be downloaded from the NFLA website –  
[http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/radwaste/Towards\\_a\\_Safer\\_Cumbria\(March2013\).pdf](http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/radwaste/Towards_a_Safer_Cumbria(March2013).pdf)

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