



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 4th March 2014

NFLA publishes marine nuclear materials transportation briefing which raises concerns over emergency procedures for lower level mixed material vessel shipments

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) publishes today a detailed Policy Briefing raising concern over certain types of shipment of radioactive materials across Northern Europe. The case study of the 'roll on, roll off' carrier *'Atlantic Cartier'* lays at the heart of NFLA concerns, which it has shared with trade unions and campaigning NGOs (1).

The Briefing has been developed for the NFLA by the independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones, who has researched extensively for three decades around the issue of the transportation of radioactive materials by sea.

The Briefing provides an overview of the different levels of radioactive transports by ship. It outlines particular concerns with a growing type of shipment that can see radioactive materials be stored close to other types of dangerous goods.

In the example of the *Atlantic Cartier*, it was transporting significant amounts of uranium hexafluoride (often referred to as 'yellow cake'), but also other dangerous chemicals, explosive materials and cars for export. Last year it was involved in a major fire, where a significant radioactive emergency incident was only narrowly avoided in Hamburg Port, Germany. Less than four months later the vessel was back in operation, delivering and unloading at UK ports such as Liverpool. This is despite a long list of safety concerns on the vessel that had been identified over the past few years. (2)

The Briefing agrees with conclusions made by Merseyside CND, in its recently published open letter to the owner of Liverpool Port, which calls for:

- ships carrying dangerous cargoes into any port should be issued with a public notice about the potential dangers which they might cause;
- the international transportation of uranium hexafluoride (UF-6) ceasing from now on;
- any ship carrying radioactive materials should have regular fire inspections;
- any ship which fails to pass such tests should be prevented from sailing;
- the ship owners and the ship management should be held legally responsible for any breach of these regulations;
- any ship carrying radioactive materials should be subject to a new set of rigorous fire and safety standards regulations;
- international shipping regulations are changed so that no radioactive materials can be transported on any ships which carry either explosives, or highly inflammable liquid gases. (3)

The NFLA have met with officers in marine trade unions and are sharing this Briefing with the RMT, FBU and Nautilus. The Briefing will be sent to the UK and Republic of Ireland Governments, devolved governments, the Parliamentary Transport Select Committees at Westminster and Dublin and the Marine Coastguard Agency seeking improvements to regulations governing such shipments. The briefing calls on such agencies to lobby the International Maritime Organisation to improve international regulations in this area. NFLA are also co-operating with the local authority marine conservation group KIMO International to disseminate this briefing to coastal local authorities around northern Europe.

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

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“This briefing raises a number of alarming concerns over a type of radioactive material shipment. It needs to be urgently considered within the shipping industry, its workforce and with government. NFLA will work with trade unions, KIMO International and campaigning groups like CND to disseminate this report widely and to challenge regulatory bodies. I call on the UK and Irish Governments to read and act on the report in order to improve an important area of nuclear materials transportation safety. Of course, this briefing reiterates the ongoing concern of the NFLA over the transport of nuclear materials across the world, whether it is by road, rail or sea. I only hope such a briefing helps ensure a major accident involving such materials never happens. Such accidents threaten the health and safety of many coastal communities and seafarers.”

Report author Tim Deere-Jones adds:

“It is evident from my ongoing research that the safety of the majority of maritime transports of radioactive materials through European waters cannot be guaranteed. The regulations covering such transports are generally little better than those covering “non-radioactive” cargos. The UK National Marine Pollution Plan, in common with many other National Plans, contains no specific plan for response to maritime radiological incidents. European Port and Local Authorities, Emergency Responders and Government Agencies appear similarly poorly prepared for reaction to such events. In order to forestall a serious maritime radiological accident, I fully support the NFLA call for improvements to the management of such shipments and for both Nation States and the International Maritime Organisation to tighten the current lax international regulations.”

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196 or the report author Tim Deere-Jones on 01834 871011.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA Policy Briefing is attached with this media release and will be placed on the NFLA website <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>.
- (2) NFLA media release, 28th August 2013
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/news/NFLA_Atlantic_Cartier_concerns.pdf
- (3) Merseyside CND open letter to Bibby Management, Liverpool Port, 27th February 2014
<http://www.mcnd.org.uk>

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