



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

## **NFLA calls on nuclear regulator and nuclear industry to improve on alarming number of nuclear security incidents**

The NFLA is alarmed to hear that there have been 398 security incidents at UK nuclear sites in the past four years.

The NFLA congratulates the Sunday Post and independent nuclear analyst Dr David Lowry (1) for bringing to public attention this response under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). (2)

The ONR response revealed there were 42 nuclear security breaches recorded in 2013. This is considerably better than previous years, as there were 121 breaches recorded in 2012, 116 in 2011 and 145 in 2010. (3) However, the NFLA shares the frustration of the Sunday Post and Dr Lowry that no information, however brief, on the detail of these breaches has been made public, as the ONR argues this could lead to further attacks by activists, saboteurs or even terrorists.

The NFLA welcomes the significant decrease in security incidents in 2013, though it shares the concerns made by independent nuclear expert John Large that the number could be significantly higher as the ONR has changed its definition of what poses a security risk to the UK's nuclear power stations. NFLA also understands the sensitivity that surrounds nuclear security matters and keeping sensitive information out of the hands from those who could use it maliciously.

However, there needs to be some form of public debate over these figures. The Sunday Post highlights some of the few issues that have come to the media's attention, such as the finding of a computer memory stick by a coach driver in a Cumbrian hotel containing sensitive business information about Sellafield's operations. (4) Other breaches include trespassers climbing barbed wire-topped fences (5) and restricted documents being sent via email by mistake.

The NFLA also notes the information obtained by Dr Lowry through the FOI Act of a KPMG audit of the Sellafield site. This report noted that, between April 2012 and November 2013, there were 11.5 "security events" every month.

For some time groups like the NFLA have been calling for a full, open and transparent debate with the ONR, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) on generic nuclear security matters. All requests have been constantly rebuffed on the grounds of 'national security'. This is simply not good enough. The NFLA and experts like Dr Lowry and John Large would considerably help improve nuclear security issues given the opportunity to discuss this matter in a sensitive manner with the regulators, government and the industry. If so many incidents are continuing to happen, then surely something is not right and needs challenging.

The nuclear sector constantly argues it is open and transparent. So what does it fear from a sensible discussion of nuclear security lapses across UK nuclear sites? With sufficient safeguards put in place, independent experts and groups like the NFLA should be able to put forward strategies to improve nuclear security culture in the UK. Otherwise, the NFLA fears a major security incident will take place, and the implications of that will only be considered after the event, which is by then too late.

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

"I am concerned and frustrated about the large number of nuclear security incidents taking place, 'probably' across most nuclear sites in the UK'. Probably' because we are not allowed to know about

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where they took place. 'Probably' because we are not even given basic information on whether these security breaches are minor or serious incidents. Given that nuclear sites like Sellafield have armed guards and huge barriers, to hear that there are over 11 security incidents a month does not leave me reassured that it is a completely secure site. I call on the regulators, government and the industry to consider carefully ways to engage with the NFLA and independent experts on these matters. We all want to see our sensitive nuclear sites as being completely secure. We want to work with them as much as is practical and possible to achieve that."

Dr David Lowry adds:

"There have been 22 incidents of so-called "moderate significance" over 4 years, but ONR decline to give any details in case a pattern of vulnerability can be constructed by a malevolent adversary, potentially a terrorist. But in my view no pattern should be able to be worked out, as there should be no repeats of the same or similar security failures or vulnerability. It would concern me that any problem discovered was not put right by the next time annual statistics were compiled. If they could not put right a security problem, they should have closed the plant until they can."

But it is hard to know whether any or all of these moderate incidents should set security alarms ringing in ONR ears, without further details."

Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 07771 930196 (who can also put journalists in touch with Dr Lowry).

Notes for editors:

- (1) Dr David Lowry is a member of the UK Energy Secretary's Geological Disposal Implementation Board, Nuclear Waste Advisory Associates and a research associate of the Institute for Resource and Security Studies, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.
- (2) Sunday Post, 11 May 2014.  
<http://www.sundaypost.com/news-views/uk/security-fears-at-nuclear-plants-1.363510>
- (3) ONR annual security report, 2011-12  
<http://www.onr.org.uk/documents/cn-security-annual-review.pdf>
- (4) Tech Week Europe, 19 October 2010.  
<http://www.techweekeurope.co.uk/news/nuclear-station-suffers-data-breach-from-lost-usb-stick-10731>
- (5) BBC News Online, 28 February 2003  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2655007.stm>

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