



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media Advisory - for immediate release, 11th October 2011

- **NFLA 'extremely disappointed' with the complacency of Mike Weightman's final nuclear safety review report**
- **NFLA tables formal complaint as its submissions fail to be put on ONR website, and get mixed up with EDF's response**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) initial response to the UK Chief Nuclear Inspector's final report is one of extreme disappointment to an analysis which glosses over many of the major elements of concern from the Fukushima incident when compared to the UK context (1). The NFLA has also written a strongly worded complaint to the Chief Nuclear Inspector, Mike Weightman, as to why its own detailed submissions to the review have not been tabled on the website of the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) (2). The only submission found on the ONR website is a brief supplementary note – the fourth page of which actually contains a letter from the Chief Executive of EDF, Vincent de Rivaz, giving the company's views on the Fukushima incident and the Weightman review! (3)

Mr Weightman's final report adds in a little detail and extra recommendations but largely gives the UK nuclear industry a clean bill of health and suggests it is one of the best regulated in the world. However, on its initial reading of the report, the NFLA would actually argue that the report shows up many serious recommendations on nuclear safety - particularly on flooding, emergency planning and security - which it is simply leaving to the nuclear industry to do the assessments and giving it a full 9 months to do it, allowing the UK Government to push on with a new nuclear build programme as if there is little to worry about. This shows a 'light-touch' regulation style which continues to concern the NFLA.

The NFLA believes the main points of its submission to the Weightman review have still not been fully considered or responded to by the ONR, such as:

- There remains a key incongruence from the interim and the final report between some of the extensive and detailed recommendations in the report placed on the nuclear industry and Government, and with the extrapolated conclusions that there was actually little to worry about for the UK nuclear industry and the new nuclear build project by the Fukushima disaster.
- A review and complete overhaul of the 'probabilistic risk assessment' model used by all nuclear regulatory authorities, including the ONR, which seriously underestimated the potential for a catastrophic and unexpected failure of the Fukushima Daiichi plant. A recommendation in the final report seeks a review of this model by the nuclear industry but the NFLA believe this needs to be considered in much more detail than a simple review – it is a fundamental concern around nuclear safety.
- Serious concerns over the safety of the European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) design following reports from the French nuclear safety regulator and a thorough analysis of its safety weaknesses by Dr Helmut Hirsch for Greenpeace International (4).
- The lack of any substantial consideration of the effects of the incident on land, marine and airborne radioactive discharges and contamination in the interim or the final report. The NFLA commissioned the independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones to develop some of these issues into a detailed 26 page annex as part of its final submission to the Weightman review. This is one of the submissions which are not on the ONR website, despite the NFLA receiving assurances that it would be fully considered by the ONR.
- The need for a much more detailed, national, open and transparent review of UK nuclear emergency planning arrangements in reference to evacuation zones and distances, qualified

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and trained personnel and effective communications, and the real concerns (noted in the Weightman interim and final report) over significant flooding of coastal nuclear sites. The NFLA believe that the ONR should be recommending that such a review is required not just in areas containing nuclear sites, but across all local authority areas where nuclear materials are transported on a regular basis. With this in mind, the NFLA have sent detailed questionnaires to UK local authority emergency planning units, as well as local and regional resilience forums, and will be reporting on these findings shortly.

- It remains far too early to be making the assumptions on nuclear safety contained in the report, given that the Fukushima incident is still not under full control yet.

NFLA Vice Chair, Councillor Ralph Pryke says:

“The scope of the Weightman review has been so narrow it is little surprise to me that it has come up with a largely clean bill of health to the UK nuclear industry, even though there are many detailed recommendations of concern contained within the report. I am dismayed with the complacency of this final report and concerned that it will be used as a green light for new nuclear build, which it most clearly is not. I am also greatly concerned that the NFLA’s detailed submission to the review has not been formally tabled on the website and has been mixed up with EDF’s submission. This shows some administrative tardiness to say the least and I will be keen to hear from Mr Weightman as to whether our common sense and well researched points around nuclear engineering, flooding, emergency planning and marine pollution have actually been fully considered by the ONR. If they have not then I have little confidence in this report.”

Ends

Further information and interviews: Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary 07771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) HSE Office for Nuclear Regulation, Final Safety Report of the UK Chief Nuclear Inspector, 11th October 2011, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/final-report.htm>
- (2) An email was sent by the NFLA to Dr Weightman today and further points will be made at the ONR NGO Forum meeting in London on the 17th November. The NFLA submissions to the prior to the final report can be found at the NFLA website: <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>.
- (3) The mixed NFLA / EDF submission can be found at the following website link: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/submissions/227801.pdf>
- (4) Greenpeace International report on Fukushima and the EPR http://www.greenpeace.org/france/PageFiles/266521/EPR_Report_Greenpeace.fr.pdf

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