



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 14th March 2011

Japanese nuclear incident - NFLA say it emphasises the continuing folly of expanding nuclear power in the UK

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) are monitoring the ongoing 'Level 4' nuclear incident taking place at the Fukushima nuclear reactor in Japan, after a combination of a huge earthquake and tsunami has led to two explosions and the serious risk of reactor meltdown.

The devastating effects of the earthquake and the tsunami and the terrible loss of thousands of people are of great sadness to the NFLA. The NFLA is very sorry for this loss of life, which it will commemorate with a minutes silence at its next Steering Committee meeting on March 25th.

The explosions at the Fukushima nuclear reactor, and the radiation leakage that is taking place, is of huge concern to people in Japan and across the world. The incident is moving quickly, but it is clear that the reactors are running out of water, overheating and the real prospect of a meltdown of a reactor is a distinct possibility – something that has not happened since the Chernobyl incident in 1986. Even if the environmental impact is not as high as Chernobyl – though that is very much to be seen – this incident has great implications on the *need* for nuclear power.

Japan has one of the most advanced nuclear safety systems in the world, but authorities are clearly struggling to deal with the impact of the devastating natural disaster on the nuclear reactors – pumping in large quantities of seawater emphasises the desperate nature of the emergency response and it is by no means certain that reactor meltdown can be avoided. Should this nightmare scenario take place the impact on the local population and environment is a great worry – even now over 170,000 people have already been evacuated and it is also clear thousands more people are self-evacuating; showing that people are not convinced of what official bodies are telling them.

Here in the UK, the Japanese incident has many implications for the nuclear issue here. Regulators continue to tell us that nuclear power stations are in the safest hands, but when devastating natural disaster occurs like this, it is clear even the highest risk matrices have failed to prevent this incident from occurring. How much will new insurance premiums for the nuclear industry have to be raised as a result of this? Will this require even further public investment from the UK taxpayer in the form of extra public subsidies? How do the implications of this incident increase the risk analysis for new nuclear power stations in the UK? And fundamentally, how can we have confidence that nuclear power remains safe when, even in the most advanced of societies like Japan, that we come to the verge of a major nuclear accident? The NFLA will be urgently asking these questions of UK regulatory authorities and the UK Government.

NFLA Chair Bailie George Regan comments:

"I am very distressed to see this major nuclear incident in Japan. My deepest sympathies go out to all those who have died and been displaced. What is clear is this though – if a wind turbine or a solar panel or combined heat and power plant fell down or broke due to a natural disaster, it would not require to evacuate 170,000 people, it would not require the desperate need to pump gallon after gallon of seawater in to try and cool a reactor, and it would not leave to the possibility of environmental catastrophe. The UK Government should ponder this in its dramatic push for new nuclear build. The UK public can see through this incident the real risks of nuclear power – let us not go ahead with building more reactors but rather invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency and micro-generation for a safer future for us all."

Ends. Further information - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930186.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES