



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

Media release - for immediate release, 5th August 2010

NFLA calls for an open and independent inquiry into fire at Aldermaston

The UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) has today written to the Health and Safety Executive calling for a full, open, independent and transparent inquiry into the recent fire at the Aldermaston nuclear weapons production facility, at which a member of staff was injured.

The BBC (1) reported that a fire started in a concrete bunker within the AWE Aldermaston site at 2100 BST on Tuesday. The fire took place in a non-nuclear explosives area. One member of staff was injured and a 600 metre cordon was put in place by the emergency services. A number of residents in the local area had to be evacuated. Roads around the site were not fully reopened until 1100 BST on Wednesday 3rd August.

AWE Aldermaston were reported as saying that the fire had 'no radiological consequences' and the Health and Safety Executive are making some initial inquiries before determining if a full investigation is required.

The NFLA are writing to the Health and Safety Executive to urge them to hold a full inquiry into this emergency incident, to ascertain what happened and how the emergency response operated, and whether the incident could have spread into more sensitive radiological areas of the site. The NFLA believes that a fire in the explosives area of the Aldermaston site could easily have spread to other parts of the facility. A thorough investigation of the possible on-site and off-site consequences of the incident clearly needs to be undertaken and the report should be made public.

Bailie George Regan, Chair of the UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities, said:

"I am very concerned to hear of this fire at the UK's nuclear weapons facility in Aldermaston. I hope the member of staff that was injured will make a full recovery. This incident shows again what the NFLA has consistently said over its 30 year history – accidents can and do happen and in the nuclear sector the consequences are all the more dangerous. When they affect a facility that maintains and manufactures the UK's nuclear weapons programme one cannot help but be alarmed. Aldermaston possesses some highly dangerous radioactive materials, explosives and other hazardous substances. Local people in Berkshire need to be reassured that this incident did not seriously endanger them. I have written to the Health and Safety Executive to ask for a full and independent inquiry and its results made publicly available."

Bailie Regan added:

"With discussions about developing a new generation of Trident nuclear weapons at the Aldermaston site - costing billions of pounds - now taking place, I also urge the Government to reconsider this decision and at the very least place it within the Strategic Defence Review. What would have happened if this fire had been in the radiological part of the Aldermaston site? Even if this is a minor accident it is imperative that lessons are learned."

Ends

Further information

Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196

Notes to Editors:

(1) BBC News Online - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-10863205>

(2) NFLA are holding a nuclear emergency planning awareness seminar on September 17th in Manchester.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

Nuclear Free Local Authorities Secretariat

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Chair: Bailie George Regan Secretary: Sean Morris



(Officers name withheld for public version of letter)
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Building 4.N2, Redgrave Court
Merton Road, Bootle
Merseyside L20 7HS

5th August 2010

Dear Mr N,

FIRE INCIDENT AT ALDERMASTON, 3RD AUGUST 2010

I am writing to you to note the concern of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) to a fire incident in an explosives store at the AWE Aldermaston nuclear weapons facility on 3rd August 2010. It is our understanding that a member of staff was injured, the emergency services were on site for some considerable time, local members of the public were evacuated and roads were not fully re-opened until 11am the following day.

I understand the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are making initial inquiries into the incident to determine if a full inquiry is required. The NFLA would suggest, given all the details of the incident mentioned above, that a full, open, independent and transparent inquiry should take place and urges the HSE to undertake it. The NFLA would also like to see the findings of such an inquiry being made publicly available to ensure that all local and wider concerns are fully considered and emergency plans amended if required.

The NFLA would also like to be reassured that all on-site and off-site consequences of the incident are fully investigated and that all emergency planning arrangements checked. Given that the explosives store would contain a number of hazardous substances, the NFLA would also like to know if there was any possibility of a wider incident occurring that could have impacted on the radiological sections of the Aldermaston facility.

Given the HSE's public policies on open and transparent regulation, the NFLA would hope that all findings from the investigation are made publicly available. With a number of local member authorities in the area, the NFLA wishes to ensure that an updated risk assessment is undertaken as a result of this incident and local agencies are fully appraised in order to minimise all such risks.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Sean Morris
Secretary of UK and Republic of Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities