



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 30th March 2011

NFLA and other NGOs raise additional emergency planning concerns post Fukushima

At a meeting between UK Government energy ministers and officials with nuclear concerned NGOs (non governmental organisations) and the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA), it was confirmed that the 8 joint demands of the NGOs / NFLA were being fully considered and were welcomed as part of a constructive engagement process. They have also been submitted to the detailed review of nuclear safety now being conducted by the Head of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Dr Mike Weightman (1).

As it is confirmed that seawater outside the crippled nuclear reactor has recorded levels of radioactive iodine levels 3335 times higher than normal (2), and that melted fuel rods and zirconium alloy cladding appear to have sunk through the steel containment pressure vessel in the number 2 reactor, the continuing problems at the Fukushima reactor clearly require a fully open, urgent and transparent public review of nuclear safety in the UK and across the world. With radioactive particles, admittedly at low radioactive levels, now being recorded in Dublin, Glasgow and Oxfordshire, this incident remains a discomfiting reminder of how far such radiation can reach (as seen in the Chernobyl disaster) and what the long-term consequences might be of a full-scale meltdown (3).

Further to the 8 demands, the NFLA also believes that the Weightman review needs to consider all aspects of nuclear emergency planning and nuclear security. With other public sector reforms and economies seeing profound changes in the emergency services and local authorities, coupled with the abolition of primary care trusts and a reform of the Health Protection Agency, concern has to be raised at how effective will be the future emergency response to a serious nuclear incident in the UK. The Fukushima incident has shown other ways with which a nuclear reactor could be attacked and disabled by malicious forces and the Weightman report needs to consider the robustness of all aspects of nuclear security and a UK multi-agency emergency response.

All proposed new nuclear reactors are going to be built at sea-level and the concern of the NFLA is that climate change models suggest increased sea-levels and coastal flooding puts evacuation of the sites, and severe damage of them, as realistic scenarios of any risk assessment. The Weightman report needs to focus on these and the upcoming 'stress tests' have to establish whether existing reactors are fully protected from such scenarios.

NFLA Chair, Bailie George Regan, commented:

"I am pleased that UK Energy Ministers and officials are seriously considering the well-argued demands on nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and new nuclear build put to them by the NFLA and over 30 NGOs. I hope these will also be considered by Mike Weightman in his wide review of UK nuclear reactors. It is quite possible that Fukushima could still become a much more serious incident than it is in the coming weeks and I firmly believe the UK emergency planning response needs to be considered as part of the Weightman review. Fukushima requires us to look again at how nuclear power operates in this country – I hope we learn quickly and put all lessons into practice as swiftly as possible."

Ends

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

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Other groups can be contacted via the NFLA Secretary.

Notes to editors:

- (1) The key 8 demands made by the NFLA and NGOs in its letter to Chris Huhne, Mike Weightman and the Nuclear Industry Association were as follows:
 - The UK Government's nuclear safety review must be undertaken in public and be fully open and transparent. It should include non nuclear industry representatives and consider nuclear reactors, spent fuel stores and reprocessing plants.
 - The HSE's 'exclusions' arrangement in the Generic Design Assessment (GDA) process and those arrangements, such as deferring issue resolution in order to artificially meet the nuclear new build timetable, must be abandoned. The GDA process and the governance regime of nuclear safety in the UK should be reviewed as a result of the Fukushima incident.
 - There should be NO public subsidies for nuclear new build as per the UK Government coalition agreement. All the groups oppose the development of new nuclear build in the UK and are concerned that the development of the low carbon price gives an indirect subsidy of up to £3.2 billion on the nuclear industry.
 - The health effects of low level radiation on land and in the marine environment need to be independently verified.
 - UK Government Ministerial statements that they have confidence that the proposed arrangements for new build radioactive waste management will exist should cease or be required to be justified or qualified.
 - The UK Government should commission an urgent independent security review on current and projected radioactive waste and spent fuel interim storage arrangements.
 - The UK Government and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority need to resolve over 100 identified scientific and technical uncertainties before developing a deep-underground radioactive waste repository.
 - The UK Government should abandon the option of using separated weapons-grade plutonium as reprocessed Mox fuel for use by domestic and overseas customers.
- (2) BBC 30th March 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12903072>
- (3) Scotsman 30th March 2011, <http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/news/Radiation-fallout-detected-in-Glasgow.6742690.jp>

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