



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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NFLA raise nuclear emergency planning concerns in Greenpeace International report with DECC and ONR

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities have raised new issues around nuclear emergency planning following the publication of one of the most definitive analyses of the Fukushima disaster by Greenpeace International.

The report 'Lessons of Fukushima' has been developed by independent specialists for Greenpeace International as the first anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear disaster approaches on March 11th. A detailed chapter on nuclear emergency planning outlines that it was human factors and a weak nuclear emergency planning regime in Japan that was as much at fault as the natural disasters that hit north eastern Japan (1). The chapter on nuclear emergency planning was written by Professor David Boiller of the French NGO ACRO, a group that were also responsible for doing a considerable amount of independent marine sampling in the Fukushima area (2).

Key points on nuclear emergency planning from the report include:

- Emergency planning for dealing with the nuclear accident at Fukushima was not functional, and the evacuation process became chaotic, leading to many people being unnecessarily exposed to radiation.
- Despite early public announcements that the radiation releases would not harm public health, the evacuation radiuses changed several times.
- Evacuation planning based on circles with diameters of several kilometres is too rigid and hopelessly inadequate in the case of nuclear power plants.
- Special software for predicting fallout patterns was not used correctly. In some cases, people were evacuated to areas with more, not less, radiation.
- Evacuation procedures of vulnerable people failed. Patients from one hospital and a nearby home for the elderly were sent to shelters: 45 of 440 patients died after staff fled. In another incident, more than 90 elderly people were left without carers. Hospitals in Fukushima Prefecture have had to suspend services because hundreds of doctors and nurses in the area resigned to avoid radiation.
- The Fukushima crisis also exposed that one of the key principles of nuclear emergency plans – confinement (recommending people to stay in their homes to avoid radiation exposure) – simply does not work in practice.
- Communities where people were confined for up to 10 days ran out of food, as well as fuel needed for eventual evacuation. In addition, specialised workers – such as drivers, nurses, doctors, social workers and firemen, who were needed to help those confined – were not prepared to stay in an area receiving large amounts of radiation.
- The post-emergency situation is also riddled with problems – including dealing with contaminated food and land, higher radiation safety limits, insufficient monitoring of radiation levels and major problems with long-term decontamination.

The NFLA have forwarded this report to leading officials in the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Office for Nuclear Regulation and the UK Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group. A full review of UK emergency planning was expected to be completed by the end of 2011, but to date it has still not been published (3). Some of these issues are also being considered by nuclear site stakeholders groups across the UK.

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The NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

“This detailed Greenpeace report provides much information that needs to be considered by the UK Government, nuclear regulators and the nuclear industry. It tallies with the concerns of the NFLA that the Fukushima nuclear disaster was not just about a destructive natural disaster but also about key safety and contingency planning failings. The NFLA will be following these up with the Government and nuclear regulators. I urge those completing the UK nuclear emergency planning review to consider this report as a matter of urgency.”

Ends

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

Notes to editors:

- (1) Greenpeace International – Lessons of Fukushima, published 27th February 2012.
<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/Campaign-reports/Nuclear-reports/Lessons-from-Fukushima.pdf>
- (2) For more information on ACRO consult <http://www.acro.eu.org/welcome.html>
- (3) For information on nuclear emergency planning in the UK consult this DECC website -
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/meeting_energy/nuclear/safety_and_sec/emergency_plan/neplg/neplg.aspx

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