



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 15th January 2014

Nuclear materials transportation – NFLA calls for urgent review to improve public safety after second train derailment in Cumbria

The NFLA notes with concern a second serious rail incident involving a train used for the transportation of radioactive materials to Cumbria.

This time a freight train, which is used to take spent nuclear fuel to the Sellafield site, hit a car at a level crossing in Silverdale, north of Lancaster at 7pm on the 14th January. The BBC reported that the vehicles travelled 300 metres down the track before stopping.

Fortunately, the train was not loaded with nuclear fuel and was travelling back from Sellafield to its depot in Crewe. No one was injured but the drivers of both vehicles were treated for shock. The incident involved attendance by Lancashire Police, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and the British Transport Police. (1)

This incident follows on shortly from a derailment of a freight train close to Barrow in September 2013 containing empty spent nuclear fuel flasks. The incident at Salthouse Junction near Barrow led to a closure of trains going into and out of Barrow for a couple of days whilst the wagons and the flasks were recovered. (2)

NFLA continue to remain concerned about accidents involving rail transports of nuclear materials. Such transports take place at regular intervals across large parts of the railway network. Of particular concern to the NFLA remain transports across the rural Scottish rail network of highly radioactive materials from the Dounreay site which are being regularly transported to Sellafield. The nuclear industry prides itself with the safety of such transports, and yet serious accidents are continuing to happen.

NFLA is also pursuing related concerns to the transportation of nuclear materials by sea. This follows information on a serious fire on the Atlantic Cartier 'roll on roll off' ship at Hamburg docks in mid 2013. The cargo on the ship included uranium hexafluoride as well as explosives, other chemicals and cars for export. Within six weeks of this serious incident the ship was unloading again at Liverpool Port. (3)

NFLA are conducting further research on these type of shipments and are meeting with senior union representatives and politicians to clarify if there are adequate national and international safety procedures in this area.

This is in comparison to the decision by Canadian nuclear utility Bruce Power not to transport large numbers of radioactively contaminated steam generators from decommissioned plants by sea from Canada to Sweden, passing between Orkney and Shetland. The high level of public and political opposition to these shipments is likely to have been a factor in this decision. (4)

NFLA Chair Councillor Mark Hackett said:

“The transportation of nuclear waste and materials by road, rail and sea appears to be increasing around the UK and through the Irish Sea. These two rail incidents are examples that accidents do happen. What would have happened if they had been full of spent nuclear fuel? I call on the Department of Transport and the nuclear industry to review the level and safety of such transports and consider more on-site long-term storage of waste. NFLA is happy to sit down with relevant agencies to discuss our concerns in more detail whilst researching this matter further.”

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Ends

For more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 0161 234 3244 or 07771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) BBC 15th Jan 2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25742406>
- (2) North West Evening Mail, 16th September 2013
<http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/nuclear-train-derails-between-barrow-and-roose-1.1084678>
- (3) NFLA media release, 28th August 2013
http://www.nuclearpolicy.info/docs/news/NFLA_Atlantic_Cartier_concerns.pdf
- (4) Bayshore Broadcasting Centre, Canada, 29th July 2013
http://www.bayshorebroadcasting.ca/news_item.php?NewsID=58910

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