



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

NFLA Media Advisory - for immediate release, 2nd September 2011

NFLA submit detailed response prior to Mike Weightman's final nuclear safety review report – key issues in emergency planning, engineering and marine environmental protection need to be fully and urgently considered

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities today submits a detailed 17 page submission (and 26 page annex) to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) for its consideration prior to the publication of its final report, expected to be published later in the month (1).

The review, led by Chief UK Nuclear Inspector Mike Weightman, was instigated after a formal request from the UK Government to consider the implications on the UK nuclear industry from the Fukushima disaster of March 11th 2011, the single worst nuclear reactor leak since the Chernobyl disaster (2). The NFLA has submitted detailed issues and concerns to the ONR at the beginning of the review and prior to the interim review report (3). The NFLA has also actively taken part in specific meetings with Mike Weightman and ONR officials and with the UK Government Energy Minister Charles Hendry and DECC officials in July (4).

The NFLA fundamentally believes that it is still far too early to make a comprehensive assessment of the Fukushima incident, **particularly given that the radiation leak has still not been brought under complete control some six months after the incident**, whilst putting a protective cover over the stricken reactors is also a considerable way off. The NFLA are also highly concerned with the narrowness of the existing Weightman review process, which has largely concentrated on technical nuclear engineering matters and not considered the wider scientific and health factors around such a large radiation leak and its impact on the environment in any great detail. It is simply not good enough to consider whether the UK's existing or potential new nuclear reactors are resilient enough to withstand natural disasters, rather it is essential that all aspects of the Fukushima disaster are considered by policy-makers across the UK Government and the specialist nuclear and health regulatory agencies. Without a full, independent public inquiry it is quite likely that key learning points from the Fukushima disaster will not come to light and potential further mistakes made with the completely unnecessary proposed construction of new nuclear reactors.

Key points from the NFLA submission to the Weightman review include:

- There remains a key incongruence from the interim report between some of the extensive and detailed recommendations in the report placed on the nuclear industry and Government, and with the extrapolated conclusions that there was actually little to worry about for the UK nuclear industry and the new nuclear build project by the Fukushima disaster.
- Serious issues raised by a number of nuclear concerned groups, and highlighted recently in a study by 'The Independent' of Fukushima workers (5), that inadequate repairs of external emergency piping had been damaged and started leaking as a result of earthquake damage **before** the tsunami wave hit.
- A review and complete overhaul of the 'probabilistic risk assessment' model used by all nuclear regulatory authorities, including the ONR, which seriously underestimated the potential for a catastrophic and unexpected failure of the plant.
- Serious concerns over the safety of the European Pressurised Reactor (EPR) design following reports from the French nuclear safety regulator and a thorough analysis of its safety weaknesses by Dr Helmut Hirsch for Greenpeace International (6).
- The lack of any substantial consideration of the effects of the incident on land, marine and airborne radioactive discharges and contamination in the interim report. The NFLA has commissioned the independent marine pollution consultant Tim Deere-Jones to develop

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES



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information

some of these issues into a detailed 26 page annex as part of its final submission to the Weightman review.

- The need for a much more detailed, national, open and transparent review of UK nuclear emergency planning arrangements in reference to evacuation zones and distances, qualified and trained personnel and effective communications, and the real concerns (noted in the Weightman interim report) over significant flooding of coastal nuclear sites. The NFLA believe such a review is required not just in areas containing nuclear sites, but across all local authority areas where nuclear materials are transported on a regular basis. With this in mind, the NFLA are shortly sending detailed questionnaires to UK local authority emergency planning units, as well as local and regional resilience forums.
- The complete lack of consideration in the interim report of the implications of the Fukushima incident on the UK's defence nuclear programme, and in particular the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Programme. The NFLA believe the final report should explain what action is being taken to review the defence nuclear programme in the light of the Fukushima accident and make it clear that a report on unclassified issues arising from such a review will be made public.

NFLA Vice Chair, Councillor Stephen Churchman says:

"The Fukushima incident has devastated large parts of eastern Japan and the health, safety, environmental, financial and political implications of this incident affect not just the Japanese people but the future of nuclear power across the world. I find it incredulous how the publication of the Weightman interim report has been used by the UK Government and the nuclear industry as a blue light to new nuclear build, when the opposite conclusion of reducing our nuclear burden is clearly the better and more preferable option, as Germany and Switzerland have shown. This submission raises some detailed points of concern from the Fukushima tragedy and I urge Mike Weightman and his team to consider them seriously before producing its final report."

Tim Deere-Jones added:

"Despite the fact that Japan is one of the world's most technologically advanced nations the whole response was characterised by evidence of a rushed, panicky and incoherent response to unforeseen circumstances. My report emphasises a number of weaknesses in that response which have had a major impact on the local land and marine environment. My report also shows clear parallels for the UK situation that need to be carefully heeded in Mike Weightman's review."

Ends

Further information and interviews: Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary 07771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA submission is attached with this media release.
- (2) Health and Safety Executive / Office for Nuclear Regulation, Interim Safety Report of the UK Chief Nuclear Inspector, 18th May 2011, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/fukushima/interim-report.htm>
- (3) See NFLA website where the submissions are located. <http://www.nuclearpolicy.info>
- (4) The NFLA Secretary attended an ONR NGO dialogue meeting on the 5th July and the DECC NGO Nuclear Dialogue meeting on the 25th July.
- (5) Independent, 17th August 2011. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/the-explosive-truth-behind-fukushimas-meltdown-2338819.html>
- (6) Greenpeace International report on Fukushima and the EPR http://www.greenpeace.org/france/PageFiles/266521/EPR_Report_Greenpeace.fr.pdf

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT VOICE ON NUCLEAR ISSUES