

Introduction

This report covers the Environment Agency's regulation of Oldbury nuclear power station and related issues.

Radioactive substances regulation

Permitting

No changes to the Environment Permit have been made since the reissue of the Permit in November 2011. The Permit's accompanying CEAR^[1] document has undergone a review by the site as described in the previous SSG report. This has concluded that there are a number of changes to the CEAR that could be made to better reflect the end of generation at Oldbury in 2012. The site has submitted the proposed changes to us and we are considering these.

Regulation

We regulate radioactive waste disposals to the environment. We do this through environmental permits that contain limits and conditions aimed at minimising wastes and protecting the environment. We also check compliance with the permit by making regular inspections at Oldbury. Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Reports (RASCAR) detailing our inspections and non-compliances found are put on the Public Register.

Our work at Oldbury has been focussed on the following themes and issues in the last quarter:

- Assessment of the impact of the Eel regulations on the site.
- Changes to the sampling and monitoring of radioactive gaseous discharges from the site to better reflect end of generation.

- Changes to the environmental monitoring programme for the site to better reflect end of generation.
- A joint inspection with the Office for Nuclear Regulation of the site's arrangements for fuel pond management and associated maintenance activities.
- Potential changes to liquid discharge arrangements for the period post-cooling of the reactors.
- Changes to the Water Discharge Environmental Permit to reflect the decreased use and discharge of cooling water.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been necessary since the last SSG meeting. However, the site failed to provide some monitoring results associated with the permit for the active site lagoon in 2012 due to an administrative error. The results have now been supplied to us. In line with our enforcement policy we have recorded this non-compliance as a CCS 4 (which is our lowest category of non-compliance) and we will take no further regulatory action at this time.

Discharge reports

The operator at Oldbury is required to report liquid and gaseous discharges to the environment and transfers of radioactive wastes to other sites on a regular basis. These reports are placed on the public register and a digest of information is available via the Environment Agency website- 'What's in your backyard?' facility^[2].

^[1] Compilation of Environment Agency Requirements.

^[2] <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/37793.aspx>

Liquid and gaseous discharges from Oldbury are at levels well within the requirements of its permitted limits. No Quarterly Notification Levels (QNLs) have been exceeded in the period.

Environmental impact

In the site permit we specify a rigorous environmental monitoring programme that requires the operator to monitor and assess the impact of their discharges on the environment. This monitoring demonstrates that the impact of the site on the environment is low.

The Environment Agencies and Food Standards Agency also carry out an independent environmental monitoring around nuclear sites. The results of this work are published annually and the latest report "Radioactivity in Food and the Environment 2011" (RIFE 2011) is now published on the Environment Agency website^[3].

In the RIFE report, the Oldbury and Berkeley sites are considered together for the purposes of environmental monitoring because the effects of both are on the same area. The RIFE report presents a yearly assessment of radiological dose to the group of people in the local population who are most exposed to radiation from the sites. In 2011, the total dose to this group of people was 0.006 mSv. This is a decrease from the figure of 0.011 mSv in 2010 and is the result of a decrease in the radiological dose due to direct radiation (also known as radiation shine). This radiological dose is far below the Government Dose limit of 1 mSv/year and even smaller compared to the average amount of radiation we all receive from natural sources each year which is around 2.7 mSv.

Foods Standards Agency consultation

The Foods Standards Agency (FSA) radiological monitoring programme has run for several decades, with little change. The rationale behind the programme and sample selection has recently been reviewed to ensure any future radiological monitoring programme has a clear rationale, is risk-based and in line with current best practice guidance.

The Foods Standards Agency (FSA) has undertaken a consultation on the future of their radiological monitoring programme. The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on proposals for revising this monitoring programme to optimise it in line with other (non-food) UK programmes. The details of the consultation can be found at the link below:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/consultations/consultations-england/2012/radioactivity-consult>

Further information

Further information on our role in regulating the use of radioactive substances and related activities on nuclear licensed sites can be found on the Environment Agency website^[4].

The Environment Agency's Lead Regulator for the Oldbury site is Robert MacGregor. Robert is a Nuclear Regulator and part of the national Nuclear Regulation Group (South) and is based at our Wallingford office.

While his principal office is in Oxfordshire, Robert provides expertise on the environmental regulation of radioactive substances on and from nuclear licensed sites in southern England and Wales. He also acts as the Lead Nuclear Regulator for Sizewell A and works with local Environment Agency teams in East Anglia, and South West England.

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^[3] <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/110353.aspx>

^[4] <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/32517.aspx>