

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 CEARAS^[1] document was slightly amended in December 2011 to simplify the reporting requirements regarding solid waste transfers and to add a new condition requiring an independent inspection of the site's management system associated with liquid flow measurement. This condition has been added to all nuclear site permits in England and Wales.

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:

- Inspection of the site arrangements for consignment of "out of scope" waste (see the "Changes to legislation" section later on in this report).
- Potential changes to liquid discharge arrangements for the period post-cooling of the reactors.
- Plans for the upgrade of parts of the active effluent treatment system.
- Plans for a joint inspection with the Office for Nuclear Regulation of fuel pond management and maintenance at the site.
- Disposal of accumulated silts in a cooling water inlet.

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].

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.

Enforcement

No enforcement action has been necessary since the last SSG meeting.

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.

^[1] Compilation of Environment Agency Requirements, Agreements and Specifications.

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

Additionally, the Environment Agencies and Food Standards Agency carry out 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) will be published on the Environment Agency website^[3] in early November 2012.

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 2.7 mSv.

Changes to legislation

The Government made some changes to the definition of radioactive material and radioactive waste in 2011 which has resulted in changes to the exemption and exclusion requirements.

The Government has implemented these changes based on international standards and guidance that supports the Basic Safety Standards Directive 1996^[4]. The Government has set out the levels at which radioactive material should be subject to regulation to ensure adequate protection of the public and the environment from radiological impacts.

The changes came into effect in October 2011 and provide increased flexibility for operators to make waste disposals in line with the waste

hierarchy, and better reflect international practice.

Further information on these changes is available via our website^[5].

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^[6].

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] 96/29/Euratom - Basic Safety Standards for radiation protection, 1996, Official Journal of the European Communities (1996) 39, No. L159.
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/radioprotection/doc/legislation/9629_en.pdf

^[5] <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/133736.aspx>

^[6] <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/sectors/32517.aspx>