

Introduction

This report covers the Environment Agency's (EA's) regulation of Oldbury nuclear power station and related issues in the period since the previous Oldbury SSG meeting in July 2015.

Radioactive substances regulation

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 inspections at intervals at Oldbury. Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Reports (RASCAR's) detailing our inspections and listing non-compliances found are put on the Public Register.

In September we investigated the arrangements Oldbury has to contain the hazardous materials remaining on site, and reviewed the site's asset management programme. No non-conformances with the permit were identified during the inspection.

Following the inspection we are confident that suitable arrangements are being put in place for managing assets now that defueling is completed.

We concluded that adequate provision is made for secondary containment of hazardous materials. Where the risk of damage to environment is high, storage tanks are located within individual bunds. Where the risk is lower, material would be contained within the building and is unlikely to enter the environment in the event of a release. Tanks, secondary containment sumps, and pipe work observed during the site inspections appeared to be in satisfactory condition.

The list of routines for inspecting civil structures, and calibrating and testing instruments and alarms appeared to be comprehensive. Where deterioration of structures has been identified, maintenance plans are in place.

Ion sieves

During the quarter Magnox developed their proposal to transfer IONSIV's from Dungeness A and Sizewell A to the Oldbury cooling pond for storage prior to disposal. We reviewed a BAT document prepared by Oldbury on the receipt and storage of IONSIV's.

It appears from the BAT assessment that, with appropriate arrangements during transport and transfer of IONSIV's into the Oldbury ponds, the risk of contamination of the Oldbury cooling ponds is low. Accordingly we have no concerns that there is a significant risk of adverse effect on liquid discharges to the environment.

We provided advice to Oldbury on regulatory aspects of IONSIV project. We will provide a written response to the BAT assessment once these aspects have been incorporated into the BAT report.

Permitting

No changes were made to Oldbury's Environmental Permit or CEAR (Compilation of Environment Agency Requirements) during the quarter.

Enforcement

We have not taken any enforcement actions in the period since the previous Oldbury SSG meeting.

Discharge reports

The operator at Oldbury is required to report liquid and gaseous discharges to the environment on a regular basis. These reports are placed on the public register and a digest of information is available via the Environment Agency website's 'What's in your backyard?' facility^[1].

Reports received from Oldbury indicate that gaseous and liquid discharges are at level well within the requirements of its permit limits. No Quarterly Notification Levels (QNLs) were exceeded in the period since the previous SSG meeting.

Radioactive gaseous discharge rates continue to decline. No clear trend is apparent for liquid effluent discharges to the Severn. Overall the dose to the reference group (the group most exposed to radiation arising from discharges from Oldbury and Berkeley) remains low- less than 1% of the statutory limit of 1 millisievert per year.

Environmental monitoring

As reported at the previous SSG meeting, we are reviewing the Environment Agency's environmental monitoring programme for each of the nuclear sites in England to ensure these remain consistent with our guidance, RSR Technical Guidance Note 2. This programme is carried out in addition to the operator's environmental monitoring programme.

We have completed the review of the combined programme at Oldbury and Berkeley. The programme will continue largely unchanged, though we will stop monitoring drinking water once the new programme is implemented in January 2016, as this task is part of the remit of the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

We concluded that sampling of soil, grass, and terrestrial dose rate monitoring are not required, even though they are standard components of the Environment Agency's environmental monitoring programme for a low risk site.

The reasons for this are that gaseous emissions from Oldbury and Berkeley are mainly of carbon-14 or tritium, which do not emit high energy gamma radiation, and the dose from these discharges is low- less than 0.01 millisieverts per annum. Dose rate monitoring will continue over marine sediments as caesium-137 is discharged in liquid effluent from Oldbury and Berkeley.

Looking forward:

During past year Oldbury has made considerable progress in removing both radioactive and non-radioactive hazards from the site and will shortly enter a new operational phase: preparations for care and maintenance.

We are satisfied that management of change arrangements are in place to develop organisational structures and management procedures that will ensure Oldbury continues to meet its permit conditions once preparations for decommissioning start on site.

We will continue to monitor the changes underway at Oldbury to provide assurance that the impact on the environment is minimised.

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 GOV.UK website ^[2].

The Environment Agency's Lead Regulator for the Oldbury site is Peter Reynolds, who is part of the Nuclear Regulation Group (South) team and is based at our Wallingford office.

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^[1] <http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/default.aspx>

^[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-regulation-in-the-environment-agency>