

Harwell Site Stakeholder Group

Environment Agency report

December 2016

This report covers the Environment Agency's (EA) regulation of the Harwell Nuclear Licensed Site and related issues.

Radioactive substances regulation

Permitting

We have received an application from Magnox Ltd to consolidate its two environmental permits into one permit. This application does not affect radioactive discharges from the site. We are currently in the process of determining the application.

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 Harwell. For all inspections we issue Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Forms (RASCARs). These reports summarise the inspection we carried out and clearly describe any permit breaches. Copies of RASCARs are available on the Environment Agency public registers on application (see email address at the end of this report).

Since the last Harwell SSG meeting we have:

- attended the Annual Review of Safety and Environment
- attended the annual Environmental Regulators' Review meeting with colleagues from the Groundwater and Contaminated Land team.
- conducted two inspections at the site

In July we visited Harwell to meet with the Environment Manager and members of the Environment Team and to understand the impact of the Magnox Management of Change 'Best Fit' process. We inspected how Harwell and Winfrith are complying with Magnox's Corporate

Radioactive Waste Adviser arrangements of characterisation at the site.

During 2016 the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Natural Resources Wales are delivering a programme of themed inspections on the characterisation of solid radioactive waste at nuclear sites. We visited Harwell as part of this programme to meet with staff involved in the project to decommission the liquid effluent treatment plant (LETP).

We identified no breaches of the environmental permit during either inspection.

Incidents and enforcement

The Environment Agency monitors breaches of permit conditions using the Compliance Classification Scheme (CCS). This ranks breaches on a 1-4 scale, with category 1 being the most serious.

Since the last SSG meeting we have raised two non-compliances against the Harwell site. The non-compliances were related to a misconsignment of a drum of waste to Sellafield which has previously been reported to the SSG. We raised two category 4 breaches for this misconsignment.

The event did not result in any environmental impact nor did it have the potential to give rise to an environmental impact. The drum which was consigned in error was destined to be sent to Sellafield at a later date. Taking into account the action by the operator to notify the regulatory authorities; conduct a thorough investigation into the matter; and undertake appropriate corrective actions, we decided that the provision of regulatory advice and guidance was the proportionate enforcement response to these non-compliances.

A RASCAR containing more detail about this event and our response to it is available on the Environment Agency's public register on application.

Discharge reports

The operator at Harwell is required to report liquid and gaseous discharges to the environment on a

regular basis. We examine these reports and produce a RASCAR for them. Copies of the discharge reports and the RASCARs are available on the Environment Agency public register. A digest of information is available via the Environment Agency website 'What's in your backyard?' facility¹.

Liquid and gaseous discharges from Harwell are at levels well within permitted limits.

Environmental impact

The site environmental permit requires the operator to monitor and assess the impact of 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 independent environmental monitoring around nuclear sites. The results of this work are published annually and the latest report "Radioactivity in Food and the Environment 2015" (RIFE 2015) is published on the Food Standards Agency website².

The RIFE report presents a yearly assessment of radiological dose to individuals in the local population who are most exposed to radiation from each nuclear licensed site. In 2015, the total dose to this 'representative person' as a result of discharges from the Harwell campus was 0.017 millisieverts (mSv). This is less than 1% of the average annual amount of radiation we all receive from natural sources (2.7 mSv/year).

Emergency preparedness

Every three years the Harwell site is required to test its ability to respond to an off-site emergency invoking the local authority multi agency response plan by holding an emergency exercise. This was done in October. We were part of the multi-agency planning group and the Environment Agency was represented in the exercise. Oxfordshire County Council will produce a report.

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 website³.

The Environment Agency's lead Nuclear Regulator for the Harwell site and its tenants is Rebecca Cleverley. Rebecca is part of the national Nuclear Regulation Group (South) (NRG(S)) which is based at the Environment Agency's Wallingford office in Oxfordshire.

NRG(S) undertakes environmental regulation of radioactive substances on nuclear licensed sites in southern England. They work closely with the local Environment Agency teams in those areas as well as external bodies such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

Members of the local Environment Agency team cover the site for general (non-radioactive substances) environment protection matters such as regulation of groundwater, contaminated land, waste management and water abstraction.

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¹ <https://www.gov.uk/check-local-environmental-data>

² <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/radiologicalresearch/radiosurv/rife>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-regulation-in-the-environment-agency>