

Harwell Site Stakeholder Group

Environment Agency report

June 2017

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

Radioactive substances regulation

Permitting

We concluded that consolidating the site's two environmental permits into one permit (as discussed at the December meeting) was not the best regulatory option. We have received a further application from the site to vary its permit for the old sewage treatment plant area outside the nuclear licensed site. This variation will allow soil waste from the old Liquid Effluent Treatment Plant (LETP) to be received for characterisation. 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 publically available on request.

We continue to have regular contact with the site. We keep in touch with progress on actions and recommendations and learn about emerging issues. We receive and assess a range of monthly reports from the site.

In March we visited the site to check compliance against the site's environmental permit. We chose to visit the Building 462 facility. We were given a good overview of operations by speaking to members of staff who specialise in different areas. Operations in the facility generate gaseous, liquid and solid radioactive wastes. We

inspected four different areas within the facility during the visit.

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

In May we visited the LETP and met with Magnox, Office for Nuclear Regulation and Public Health England. We discussed Magnox's plans for remediating the area and the eventual removal of the area from the Nuclear Licensed Site and the Environmental Permit.

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 had no cause to raise any non-compliances against the site.

Discharge reports

Through the site's environmental permit and the application of Best Available Techniques (BAT), we require that operators produce the minimum amount of radioactive waste and release as little as possible into the environment. Disposal of wastes – as solids, liquid or gases can only be made via permitted routes or to permitted sites. The site 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 publically available on request.

Liquid and gaseous discharges from Harwell continue to be 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 website at:

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

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 17 microsieverts (μSv). This is less than 1% of the average annual amount of radiation we all receive from natural sources (2700 μSv /year).

Emergency preparedness

A new External Agencies' Liaison Group has been formed to establish communications across the whole Harwell campus concerning emergency arrangements. We welcome Magnox taking the lead on this initiative and will continue to be a part of the group with our multi-agency partners.

Further information

A public register service is available on the Gov.UK website at

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/index>

Alternatively you can request access to public register documents from the Customers and Engagement Team in the Wallingford office. Please email WTenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

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 pages of the Gov. UK website at:

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

Apologies

We send apologies for our absence at this June 2017 meeting.

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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