

Oldbury Site SSG Report

31 January 2019 meeting

This report covers our regulation of Oldbury Site and related issues over the period November 2018 to January 2019

Radioactive Substances Regulation

We regulate radioactive waste disposals to the environment. We do this by placing limits and conditions in environmental permits, which helps us to ensure that radioactive waste discharges are minimised and that the environment is protected. We carry out regular checks of Magnox's compliance with our regulatory requirements.

Site Regulation

We check compliance with the permit by undertaking inspections at the site. We prepare Radioactive Substances Compliance Assessment Reports (RASCARs), detailing our inspections and any non-compliances identified. These reports are placed on our public register. In addition to our own inspection activities we routinely review Magnox's reports of events and incidents occurring on site and follow-up on these where appropriate.

We have carried out one site inspection at Oldbury since our last report to the SSG. The inspection covered a number of areas, including a review of operational controls and management arrangements in place to ensure compliance. We concluded that arrangements assessed were adequate, and operational controls were sufficient to ensure compliance. No non-compliances were identified, but one recommendation was made.

Enforcement

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

Environmental Permitting

Following the publication of the Guidance on Requirements for Release of nuclear sites from radioactive substances regulation (GRR) in July, we will now begin the process of varying site operators' permits to implement the changes associated with the guidance. Separately, Oldbury plan to submit an application to vary their environmental permit in 2019, to remove a discharge outlet associated with the Centre Block Contamination Ventilation system. This outlet is no longer in use and has been blanked. We will determine the application to vary the permit once submitted.

Discharge Reports

Nuclear sites are required to routinely report to us their liquid and gaseous radioactive waste discharges to the environment. We review these reports for compliance and this work is detailed in a RASCAR, which is placed on our public register.

Discharges for the period September to December 2018 were submitted within the required timeframes. As a result of the recent draining of the pond and associated operations, there was an increase in volume of liquid discharge, and associated activity. Levels of activity discharged remain well below the relevant annual discharge limits, Oldbury indicated to us in December 2018 that they may exceed the Quarterly Notification Level (QNL) for tritium in early 2019. Operators are required to inform us when a predetermined level of activity, the QNL, is exceeded within a 3-month period. This is to notify us of any significant short term changes in operation or plant performance and process control. Exceeding the QNL is not a breach of the permit, but we require operators to review the techniques used to control discharges. Given the discharges are associated with planned decommissioning activities, and are expected to return to previous levels shortly, we consider the discharges to be BAT, and there to be minimal risk of the annual discharge limit being exceeded.

Oldbury subsequently notified us of the exceedance of the liquid tritium QNL on 15th January 2019.

Gaseous discharges remained stable, with activity well below the relevant annual discharge limits, with no Quarterly Notification Levels (QNL) exceeded.

Environmental Monitoring

We carry out sampling and analysis under our independent environmental monitoring programme, in association with the Food Standards Agency. The results of this work are published in our annual Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE) report. Berkeley and Oldbury sites are considered together for the purposes of environmental monitoring because the effects from both sites contribute to the same area.

The monitoring data for the calendar year 2017 was published in RIFE report 23 (RIFE 23) in October 2018, and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/radioactivity-in-food-and-the-environment-rife-reports>

For Berkeley and Oldbury, total dose for the representative person decreased when compared to the previous year, to <0.005mSv for 2017. Levels of radioactivity found in the environment remain low and close to background levels.

In parallel to this programme, Magnox is required to carry out its own programme of environmental monitoring and to submit the results of this programme to us on a periodic basis. We received notification from Magnox in December that slightly elevated levels of Iodine-131 was detected at one of their sampling sites. This is a repeat issue, and is not thought to be related to operations at Oldbury site.

We make the information from both Magnox's and our own environmental monitoring programmes available on our public register.

Geological Disposal

On 19th December 2018, BEIS published the policy paper, [Implementing Geological Disposal: Working with Communities: An updated framework for the long-term management of higher activity radioactive waste](#).

This document sets out the Government's overarching policy framework for managing higher activity radioactive waste through implementing geological disposal and how they will work with communities to find a location for a geological disposal facility (GDF).

Alongside this policy paper, the Government also launched a new national consent-based process in England to find a site to host a GDF. Radioactive Waste Management Limited (RWM) is responsible for implementing geological disposal and they will lead the siting process.

The Environment Agency will regulate a GDF jointly with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). We are responsible for making sure that the developer and operator of a geological disposal facility (GDF) in England meets the high standards we have set to protect people and the environment, both now and in the future. Our role is described in more detail at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulating-the-geological-disposal-of-radioactive-waste-environmental-protection>. We will not be involved in the decision to select a potential site for a GDF although we will be available to provide information and advice to communities on environmental protection.

If you require further information about our role, or if you would like to be on our mailing list, you can contact us by e-mail: nuclear@environment-agency.gov.uk.

The Environment Agency's Lead Regulator for Oldbury Site is Alex Lord, based in the Environment Agency's Nuclear Regulation Group (South) (NRG(S)).

NRG(S) is responsible for the environmental regulation of radioactive waste disposals on or from nuclear licensed sites in southern England (and in south Wales, on behalf of Natural Resources Wales). We also work closely with the local Environment Agency teams in Wessex Area in relation to other Environment Agency roles and responsibilities.

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