



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

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NFLA publish nuclear emergency planning briefing and local authority survey of readiness and training

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities today publishes its latest policy briefing, which provides an overview of nuclear emergency planning and a survey of local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales on the post-Fukushima issues to consider in developing appropriate plans and training (1).

The briefing provides an update to NFLA members on the Fukushima disaster, the Office for Nuclear Regulation's (ONR) final report on the possible impacts of the disaster on the UK nuclear industry, and the UK Government's nuclear emergency planning review. It also provides the findings and conclusions from a survey of Councils in England, Scotland and Wales on their nuclear emergency planning knowledge, readiness, training and involvement in the national review. The survey also asked some questions around the Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group (NEPLG), which is the UK Government's group that provides national guidance on such matters.

The findings of the survey will be fed into the UK nuclear emergency planning review and the ONR for further consideration.

The key conclusions from the NFLA survey include:

- The survey showed that knowledge, training and experience of Local Authority Emergency Planning Units with fixed nuclear sites in their area is substantial, but for other Local Authorities is more patchy and limited, which may be of concern for a wide-area type of incident like the Fukushima disaster.
- Local Authority Emergency Planning Officers in areas with fixed nuclear sites had formally inputted to the ONR reviews through the NEPLG's Local Authority Sub-group. Again, Councils without such sites have largely not got involved in the review.
- CBRN (Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear) (2) planning and exercises has clearly expanded and deepened across the country, and has brought more awareness of nuclear issues to the big-city metropolitan councils as a result, which is to be welcomed.
- There was only patchy knowledge of the NEPLG from Local Authorities who do not possess fixed nuclear sites in their area. Some individual comments mentioned that the NFLA survey had encouraged them to research the NEPLG's role.
- There were some interesting points made over the potential size of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zones around UK nuclear sites. Most felt that, though smaller than the Fukushima evacuation zone, or to those used in the United States of France, there was scope in the REPPIR (3) regulations and on appropriate scientific and technical advice for the zone to be quickly and flexibly extended. CBRN planning had assisted Local Authorities in thinking more flexibly around the size of evacuation zones.
- In the NFLA's view, experience of widespread flooding and the reviews of the multi-agency response to them like the Pitt Review, has shown that recovery planning is a difficult, complex and expensive part of the emergency planning process. The NFLA would strongly encourage the UK Government and the NEPLG to consider in detail the issues around prolonged recovery planning for nuclear emergencies.

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- The majority of respondents felt national and regional training events for nuclear incident planning would be of particular benefit.
- As a result of responses from the survey, the NFLA recommends that the NEPLG and the UK Government consider both the funding of public information campaigns and encourages it to interface directly with local nuclear concerned groups over the type of public information they would be released.
- Most respondents felt that there was a need for national government to consider and review public information for emergencies in its totality and not just for this type of incident in isolation. The NFLA would endorse this view.
- Finally, all respondents noted that they saw the fairly recent development of Scientific and Technical Advisory Cells (STAC) – a multi-agency pool of staff with specific expertise for chemical, radiological and other scientific incidents – as welcome and fulfilling the local needs for a response to a nuclear emergency. The NFLA though remains concerns over the major funding crisis affecting all emergency responders and whether there will be enough well trained staff in this area around the country for a large nuclear emergency.

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

“I welcome the very useful information and background provided in this NFLA briefing and survey and will be encouraging all our members to discuss it with their local emergency planning officers. I am also pleased to hear that it has gone to every Local Resilience Forum in England, Scotland and Wales for consideration, as well as the UK Government, Scottish and Welsh Governments and the ONR. The survey shows the need to constantly improve nuclear emergency planning readiness across the UK and not just to areas which contain nuclear sites. With large transports of nuclear materials increasing by road, rail and sea, and given the learning points of the Fukushima disaster, we have to develop a truly national and international nuclear emergency planning culture. NFLA will continue to contribute positively to this debate.”

Ends

For further information and interview opportunities contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 00 44 (0)161 234 3244 or 00 44 (0)7771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA Policy Briefing on nuclear emergency planning is attached.
- (2) CBRN commonly refers to the possibility of a malicious device containing chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials being used in an urban area.
- (3) Radiation (Emergency Planning and Public Information) Regulations place a duty on local authorities to develop appropriate strategies, plans and public information to those communities in close proximity to a nuclear facility.

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