

Office for Nuclear Regulation

An agency of HSE

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Mr P Burt
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Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 (REPIR) and Detailed Emergency Planning Zones (DEPZ)

Dear Mr Burt

Many thanks for your recent letter dated 23 April 2012 and for the report from Large & Associates.

The Nuclear Information Service (NIS) has made a number of important observations and raised some relevant issues. I can assure you we take these seriously within an approach of continuous improvement, to ensure high standards of nuclear safety are maintained and that the public are properly protected from the operations at AWE's nuclear licensed sites. In this respect, I would also refer you to the 'Weightman' reports produced in response to the Fukushima nuclear accident that confirmed the strengths of the UK emergency planning approach whilst recommending a number of improvements at site, local and national levels. I can confirm to you that the lessons from the Fukushima accident are being learnt by regulators, industry and the wider nuclear community with this high priority work being led by DECC & ONR to secure a new National Strategic Framework for emergency preparedness and response in the UK.

I believe that the current DEPZs for both of the AWE plc licensed sites are appropriate, meet the requirements of the regulations and are fit for purpose. The emergency planning arrangements are also capable of extension to deal with any less likely larger scale radiation emergencies that are beyond those incidents defined in the regulations as reasonably foreseeable.

I can confirm that in 2011 AWE submitted on time a revised Report of Assessment for the Aldermaston site and an assessment of no material change for Burghfield to the standard required by the regulations. The Aldermaston submission was supported by a thorough and complete Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluation.

As you are aware, ONR, has completed the technical assessment of the company's 2011 Reports of Assessment. ONR will now consult with the local authority and other duty holders to discuss the outcome of the technical assessment in the context of the wider emergency planning environment to determine if any changes are appropriate to the detailed emergency planning arrangements at Aldermaston. Once this process is completed and a decision has been made, our process and rationale will be made available on our website. In the attached annexe, I have provided more detail in response to your concerns about the process for establishing emergency planning zones.

I trust the above and the annexe address the points raised in your letter. I would like more time to review the full report from Large & Associates and, if it remains appropriate to do so, I will respond more fully in due course.

Many thanks again for raising your concerns. I understand that you have raised these separately with the AWE Local Liaison Committee, and I am therefore copying this letter to the members so that they are aware of our response and to AWE.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "David Senior". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

David Senior
HM Deputy Chief Inspector
Programme Director – Defence Facilities
Programme Director – Decommissioning, Fuel & Waste

Annex

Reports of assessment

REPPIR requires operators and licensees to review their Hazard Identification and Risk Evaluations (HIRE) every three years, and to inform HSE (ONR) of any material changes through submission of amended Reports of Assessment (RoA). HIRE is a process of assessment of hazard and risk and may be captured in a range of documentation, but the specific submissions to ONR and for public information purposes is the summary of this work in Reports of Assessment.

Regulatory Scrutiny

ONR undertakes significant regulatory assessment of safety arguments and documentation under the Nuclear Installations Act and the site licence as well as under REPPIR. In light of this, we consider the attention given to AWE's submissions in 2005 and 2008 to be proportionate and consistent with our Enforcement Policy Statement.

Under REPPIR regulation 5 the operator is required, on a triennial basis, to re-examine its HIRE if there has been a material change, or to sign a declaration if there hasn't. AWE's Reports of Assessment for 2005 and 2008 indicated there was no significant change to its assessment of the risk to the public, and ONR did not therefore need to prioritise detailed examination of the submission.

AWE's 2011 Report of Assessment for the Aldermaston site and underpinning documents have now been subject to more detailed review by ONR. Consultation with the local authorities is ongoing to determine any impact on the detailed emergency planning arrangements at Aldermaston taking into account other relevant factors. When complete, the outcome of this process and the rationale for the DEPZ will be confirmed to the Local Authority and duty holders, and will be made available online.

Compliance with legal requirements

In respect of the timing of their submissions to ONR, AWE are consistent in meeting the duties required of them under REPPIR. The HIRE reviews have been conducted every three years.

General and internal guidance and process clarity

Guidance to duty holders and regulators on the application of REPPIR is available on HSE website at

<http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/saleproduct.jsf?catalogueCode=9780717622405>

We are building on this through the development of internal ONR guidance to enhance the consistency of our interventions across the industry. Once internal consultation is complete, and the guidance issued, it will be available on our website, and will provide further clarity on our REPPIR process and the determination of the DEPZ.

Sensitive material

The undertaking of a HIRE process may generate a considerable amount of documentation. Certain defined aspects of this material will be included in the Reports of Assessment to HSE (schedule 5 of the regulations) and will

subsequently be made available to the public. In the case of the AWE reports and in the interests of national security, HSE has given approval under regulation 16.6 for some of this information to be withheld from publication. This includes any information on assessment of the risk from unauthorised behaviour of the employees or members of the public.

In order to carry out its assessment of the Reports of Assessment, ONR has had access to all of the information in the Report of Assessment and additional material generated by the HIRE process. In addition, as noted above, ONR has access to relevant information contained in site and facility safety case documentation.

Current DEPZ

ONR is content that the size of the detailed emergency planning zones around the AWE sites are appropriate to the hazard potential presented by these sites as recorded in the 2008 Reports of Assessment. As noted above, we are currently reviewing the Detailed Emergency Planning arrangements for the Aldermaston site in light of the revised Report of Assessment, submitted in 2011.

You draw comparisons between the AWE DEPZs and the planning zones around the US Pantex nuclear weapons site and with the zone imposed following the Fukushima accident; both can be misleading. In particular, we would highlight the significantly different radiological hazard posed by power reactors and their spent fuel. Emergency planning takes account of the nature and scale of the hazard at the site concerned and approaches differ in accordance with national legislation and local circumstances.

Extendibility

The regulations do not require an 'extendibility zone'; however, extendibility has been considered in the West Berkshire REPIR off-site plan (see p113) <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=23078>. HSE considers that emergency plans should be capable of being extended to deal with a larger even less likely radiation emergency using general contingency plans. Any consideration to apply extendibility would be defined by the nature of the event.

The topic of planning for extendibility is currently under review, and the Nuclear Emergency Planning Liaison Group (NEPLG) is taking this issue forward as part of a wider programme of work overseen by DECC on behalf of all government departments and the regulators.