

MEETING ON RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES REGULATION AND THE PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES

This was held at DEFRA Innovation Centre, Reading on 4/4/08.

The meeting brought together representatives from the Environment Agency, DEFRA and their consultants together with invited representatives from both the nuclear and non nuclear sectors to discuss a draft of a document describing the Radioactive Substances Regulation Environmental Principles (the REPs).

The document is intended to guide the Agency's inspectors in regulation of radioactive substances primarily on nuclear sites but is also applicable to non nuclear sites. The document outlines a framework for regulation based on twelve generic principles, closely following the IAEA's Safety Principles.

The day began with a series of short presentations and the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers. There were presentations on some of the relevant work that DEFRA is currently undertaking and the rationale behind the REPs and the principle of Best Available Techniques (BAT), a term which is heavily used throughout the REPs.

The following sessions were all of an interactive nature, initially involving work within groups made up of three unfamiliar people, including where possible someone from the non nuclear sector. We were taken to a room and seated in tables of six. Having been issued with several post it pads and pens, the groups were required to walk around two rooms where each of the twelve principles were displayed on posters and using our post-it notes to add our comments on the proposed REPs. The Agency promised that all of the comments would be looked at and considered in the drafting of the consultation document. This session stimulated useful discussions between the nuclear and non nuclear representatives as a result of their differing experiences and perspectives; however, this made it difficult to comment on all of the posters within the allocated time.

After lunch, we had the opportunity to work on one of seven case studies proposed by the EA. Many of the non nuclear sector representatives chose to work on case study concerning the extension of a medical research facility, the idea being for us to work through the document and to see whether any of the principles in the REPs might cause us problems and where more guidance was needed or would be helpful. The general consensus was that the REPs would not have much impact on the way we that we proceeded since we were already using BPM principles but that we expected the Agency to take a proportional response. Although this was a useful session, at the end of the allotted time we had not worked our way through the entirety of the document. We then had to feedback our main conclusions on the process to the other groups. Each group was then tasked to list at least three of the most important messages that we wanted the Agency to consider in developing the principles and feedback these to the other groups. Several common themes emerged from these discussions which the agency also undertook to consider.

Finally before leaving we were asked to write two more post it notes – one as our own message to the EA and another describing something that we had either learnt that day or a thought that had particularly occurred to us.

Overall it was a useful opportunity to contribute to the Agency's documents and to help shape the principles they will use when regulating our respective use of radioactive

substances. The consultation document on the REPs will be more widely available later in the year as part of a three month consultation period, hopefully in June. The Agency was keen to point out that the BAT principle was simply an evolution of the application of best practicable means and the best practicable environmental options that we have become familiar with and that there would not be any changes to wording in existing permits. They also stated that publication of the REPs did not extend their regulatory powers.

However it was clear from feedback from many of the groups that a lot of the invited representatives felt that more work could be done on making the document flow in a more logical fashion and that it needed to make more clear which sections were relevant only to nuclear sites and those sections which were applicable to both nuclear and non nuclear users. Comments were also made about whether given the similarity of the REPs to the HSE's document on Safety Assessment Principles, and it was thought this was an ideal opportunity for the two regulators to work more closely together and consideration should be given to issuing joint guidance.

Of the 12 generic principles, those of most interest to the non nuclear sector are likely to be:

- ✍ The Regulatory Framework
- ✍ Management And Leadership For The Environment (building on current management conditions in certificates of Registration and Authorisation but making it clear that it must apply through all levels of the organisation)
- ✍ Compliance Assessment
- ✍ Enforcement
- ✍ Radiological Protection
- ✍ Radioactive Substances Management (including waste disposal), which was by far the lengthiest section of the document
- ✍ Evaluation and Information which sets out how the Agency will request and use the information it receives to make its decisions on applications.

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