

NEWS FROM THE SULG

Small Users' Liaison Group

The 27th meeting of the SULG was held on 6th December 2006. The following matters were discussed:

Qualified expert competencies

The Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER) has been commissioned by the environment agencies to set up a project to define the competencies of a qualified expert in radioactive waste management. The competencies will have a core element and an industry specific element. Inputs to this process are required from the various industry sectors and can either be given directly to SNIFFER or via a number of workshops that are being held at the end of March 2007, invitations to which will be sent out before the end of January 2007. An elaborate certification scheme is not envisaged.

UK Discharges Strategy Review.

A presentation providing an overview of Defra's review of the UK Radioactive Discharges Strategy, was given by Dr Martin Hum and Mrs Yvette Bosworth (Defra RAS Division). The scope of the review covers both nuclear and non nuclear users and looks at both aqueous and aerial discharges. The revised strategy, which is to be published next year, will include discharge predictions for each sector until 2030. Solid waste disposal is not covered by the review.

Initial consultation with stakeholders has been undertaken and a stakeholder workshop will be run in April 2007. The strategy will then be put out for public consultation in the autumn. Although the Strategy aims to reduce discharges it is not Defra's intention to impose requirements that go beyond BPM.

Review of Exemption Orders

The program for this review is uncertain due to funding problems. It was indicated that a blank sheet approach would be taken with any suggestions being considered. Stakeholder engagement has already started and continues at a conference in Cardiff on 31 January 2007.

Safegrounds

A presentation was given by Safegrounds Learning Network, a forum for developing and disseminating good practice guidance on radioactively and chemically contaminated land on nuclear and defence sites in the UK. This is sponsored by the Construction Industry Research Improvement Association. Consultation is currently underway on guidance on land management of such contaminated area. See www.safegrounds.com and www.ciria.org for further information.

Transport issues

The carriage of dangerous goods regulations are currently updated every 2 years. Consultation on radioactive material transport for small users finished in mid January 2007 and the new regulations have a projected enactment

date of July 2007. Specific sector guidance will not be produced by the regulators but any such guidance produced by the involved sectors can be if requested.

National Dose Assessment Working Group

A presentation was given on the work undertaken by the above group. This was formed in 2002 with a remit to assess dose to the environment from aqueous and gaseous radioactive waste. They look at how dose assessments are performed and verify the methodologies. All work undertaken can be viewed on their website at www.ndawg.org.

Strategy for Radioactive Substances (RAS) Regulation

A presentation was given by the Environment Agency on their current work on developing a strategy for the Radioactive Substances Regulation function within the EA. The strategy can be found at http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO1206BLTQ-e-e.pdf?lang=_e

RSA Applications forms review

This review has been partly brought about by the HASS regulations. The Environment Agency are hoping to introduce an online application process, however due to concerns relating to the security of information regarding radioactive sources this may not be possible. New forms should be available for download from the Environment Agency website from April 2007 with hopefully an online application system in place 12 to 18 months later if the security issues can be addressed.

Environment Agency Customer Survey

Test Research is once again undertaking an annual telephone customer survey on behalf of the Environment Agency relating to radioactive substances. If you are contacted to assist with this, check that it is Test Research that have contacted you and if satisfied with the response please assist with the survey. They should not require any sensitive information relating to sources or storage arrangements; caution should be exercised at any time over telephone requests for such information.

RSA Charges

The annual review of EA charges was consulted on recently and overall the proposed increases for RSA 93 permit holders, for the coming financial year, is 2.3%. This is a below-inflation increase.

Sealed Source Disposal Program

To date 7025 sources have been registered for disposal of which 5259 have been disposed of.

Very Low Level Waste (VLLW) Review

A new statement of policy on very low level waste was issued to Defra ministers for consideration at the beginning of December. If agreed this will be placed before Parliament in January. The policy indicates that the waste producer should have the flexibility to deal with his VLLW as they feel best providing they have the following in place: a waste plan, a risk assessment, and authorisation from the Environment Agency. The policy, if approved, will

create a new category of VLLW for high-volume nuclear decommissioning wastes in terms of Bq/g, with a relaxation for Tritium and Carbon 14, there is also some discussion relating to an alpha component to such waste. The VLLW activity concentration criteria used by small users (Bq/m³) will remain unchanged.

Dates of 2007 meetings

These are scheduled for 26 June and 27 November 2007. If you have any issues that you wish to be raised at future meetings or any queries in relation to the above please contact Mark Singleton (mark.singleton@sth.nhs.uk) or Mike Dunn (mike.dunn@uhl-tr.nhs.uk).