

## Chapter 2: General Framework



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### **2.1 Scope**

- 2.1.1 This chapter provides a general context to the Consolidated Guidance. It describes the underlying arrangements which have been developed for responding to an emergency in the UK over a number of years, and which have been developed and adapted for an emergency in the nuclear industry by NEPLG and its constituent organisations.
- 2.1.2 NEPLG will as a point of principle try to align nuclear response arrangements with the practices evolving from the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.

### **2.2 Emergency Requirements**

- 2.2.1 A comprehensive framework of legislation exists to ensure that the UK's civil and defence sector nuclear installations operate within a strict regulatory regime and achieve the highest standards of safety and environmental impact. Under the site licence or equivalent for defence nuclear installations, operators are required to demonstrate, to the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, or where applicable to the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR), the safety of activities at their sites and that they are complying with the conditions of the site licence or Authorisation. They are also required to review and reassess the safety of their plants periodically and systematically. These requirements stem from the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, as amended, (NIA) and for defence installations, the Secretary of State's declaration that standards and management arrangements are, so far as reasonably practicable, at least as good as those required by legislation. All are governed by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA), and the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 (REPPIR).
- 2.2.2 The UK Government is signatory to a range of international conventions and treaties under which the operation of the nuclear industry and the UK regulatory framework is scrutinised against internationally recognised good practice.
- 2.2.3 In the unlikely event of a major UK accident or emergency the response to the effects is managed primarily at the local level, and generally under the operational co-ordination of the police or local authority.
- 2.2.4 Central Government's role involves briefing Parliament, the media and the public at the national level, and the provision of information to the UK's international partners. Where necessary, it also covers supply of specialist

advice and assistance to support the local response and co-ordinating the provision of any necessary extra resources and action necessary at the national level.

- 2.2.5 Central Government activity is co-ordinated by a lead department nominated by the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC). For serious accidents at civil nuclear sites in England or Wales this is the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). In Scotland this would fall to the Scottish Executive (SE). A "catastrophic" accident would fall to the Cabinet Office and would be led by CCC at the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR).
- 2.2.6 For defence nuclear sites, the MOD is the lead department. For defence nuclear accidents in Scotland, MOD is the lead department. However the Scottish Executive will lead on public protection and consequence management issues.
- 2.2.7 The Cabinet Office CCS stands ready to assist the lead department in any way required e.g. to assist in resolving problems that cannot be dealt with under lead department auspices.
- 2.2.8 The Welsh Assembly has specific responsibilities in relation to any accident in Wales and whilst there are no nuclear power stations in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Local Executive would co-ordinate departmental responses to nuclear emergencies affecting the Province emanating from sources either in Great Britain or overseas.
- 2.2.9 The roles and responsibilities of these departments, together with those of other responding organisations in an emergency at a nuclear site are set out in Chapter 4.
- 2.2.10 It should be noted that the remit of NEPLG extends only to the off-site nuclear emergency planning and response arrangements for fixed nuclear sites within the UK. Civil and defence nuclear transport operations are therefore outside of its remit and are not covered by this guidance. DECC will take the lead in the event of an accident occurring outside the UK involving a release of radioactivity. The Department for Transport will advise on the transport of civil radioactive material, and will take the lead in responding to any accident involving the transport of such material in the UK by road, rail, sea or air.

### **2.3 Nuclear Emergency Response**

- 2.3.1 The general principle for nuclear emergency response involves writing and testing plans based on the reasonably foreseeable nuclear accident,

sometimes called the "reference accident" (i.e. worst credible accident) level and the principle of extendibility for accidents in excess of this.

- 2.3.2 As a condition of the site licence and of the REPPiR regulations, the site operator is required to prepare and test on-site emergency plans. Where the plan incorporates support from the emergency services the operator will consult with agencies involved.
- 2.3.3 Local authorities' duties under REPPiR, in connection with off-site emergency plans, particularly focus on the detailed emergency planning zone (DEPZ) defined by HSE, and making arrangements to supply information to the public in the event of a radiation emergency occurring. They may also be involved in the dissemination of prior information to the public from nuclear operators.

The key duties are to:

- prepare, review, revise, test and implement an off-site plan for any premises with an operator's plan. The plan should bring together the emergency arrangements of all the off-site agencies with a role to play in the intervention of a radiation emergency occurring at the premises, and
  - prepare arrangements to supply information to members of the public in the event of a radiation emergency actually occurring, however it may occur. These arrangements are intended to cover events such as fallen nuclear-powered satellites, transport accidents or incidents occurring overseas that may also affect Great Britain, as well as from premises subject to REPPiR.
- 2.3.4 Ancillary emergency facilities, generically known as Strategic Co-ordination Centres (SCCs), have been established in respect of each of the larger civil and defence nuclear sites. They usually have a nominated centre to act as a media briefing centre nearby. The SCC is often located at the local police headquarters, where during the emergency phase of any nuclear emergency the police would co-ordinate the activities of the response organisations. The police would chair Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) meetings which would involve all the key organisations with a role in the response and where decisions would be made on action to protect the public. The police would also arrange for information and advice on those issues to be passed to the public via the media briefing centre.
- 2.3.5 In the event of a nuclear accident at a civil nuclear site a Government Technical Adviser (GTA), usually a senior official of HSE's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, would be appointed by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), or Scottish Ministers, to attend

the SCC to provide independent and authoritative advice to the police and other authorities handling the off-site response. It would also be the GTA's role at media briefings to provide an authoritative response on behalf of government on these matters and on the course of the emergency. A Government Liaison Officer (GLO), formerly known as a Senior Government Liaison Representative (SGLR), would also be appointed in the event of a nuclear accident at a civil nuclear site to provide a communications link between central Government and the local agencies.

2.3.6 In the event of an accident at a defence nuclear site, the MoD's Government Liaison Officer is the Military (or MoD if civilian) Co-ordinating Authority (MCA).

2.3.7 The principles which apply to response to accidents at UK nuclear sites should also apply to the recovery (i.e. decontamination and clean-up) phase. NEPLG would encourage extension to the recovery phase of the arrangement whereby local authorities produce co-ordinated plans.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

2.4.1 The emergency planning principles and arrangements described here have been developed over many years and have provided a basis for constant evolution and continuous improvement in the light of nuclear exercise experience, and events and experience elsewhere. NEPLG will continue to seek improvement through its activities and deliberations, and in the light of all relevant experience.

