



Public Involvement in the Safety of Research Reactors

Lecture 3.1 D

Thursday, 16 September, 2004

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Public Involvement

Regarding the role of the public, the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety of Research Reactors says the following:

- (Section V.12):

“The State should, if it deems necessary, define how the public and other bodies are involved in the regulatory process.”

- (Section V.14):

“The State should establish an effective system of governmental emergency response and intervention capabilities relating to research reactors.”

- (Section V.18)

“The State should take appropriate steps to ensure that arrangements are put in place to inform neighbouring States in the vicinity of a planned research reactor, insofar as they are likely to be affected by the research reactor, and upon request, provide sufficient information.....for emergency planning and response.”

Implications of these statements:

- **Considerable diversity and flexibility in application of Code Guidelines.**
- **Decisions to be made by each state regarding the extent of public involvement in the regulatory process—this is tied to the philosophies, culture, and normal practices in each state.**
- **Adequate protection of the health and safety of the public is tied to the ability of the public to understand the risks from a research reactor and to respond appropriately to government communications in case of an emergency.**

Public Involvement

Typical Practices in countries that have nuclear power programs:

- **Education of the general public about nuclear technology**
 - in schools at the primary and secondary levels
 - in the Media through educational articles
 - programs associated with specific facilities
- **Participation of public in the Regulatory processes:**
 - Siting of nuclear facilities e.g. by public hearings
 - Public involvement in Licensing and Rulemaking
 - Public involvement in Enforcement
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) develop funding and expertise, prepare educational materials, may comment on regulatory processes and even initiate legal actions on behalf of citizens.**

Public Involvement

Typical Practices in countries that have nuclear power programs:

- **WWW---Government Agencies, Professional Organizations, Universities, NGOs, Business Organizations, and Citizen groups often maintain Sites on the world-wide-web that promote general education of the public or provide information that promotes a particular point of view.**
- **Meetings, public forums, governmental proceedings and debates, often reported in the media or given live coverage, seek to explore the risks and benefits of nuclear technology.**
- **Panels of prominent experts, sometimes commissioned by governments, perform specific studies and evaluations and provide their findings in reports and documents that can be widely distributed to the public.**

Public Involvement-- Major Perspective

- **Because nuclear technology has the potential to do either great good for Society, or great damage through the use of nuclear weapons, or the spread of nuclear contamination, its use is highly controversial.**
- **People rightly fear the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons and contamination, while they seek the many positive benefits to health, economics and quality of life that come from nuclear technology.**
- **To gain public support for civilian uses of nuclear technology, societies need to be able to demonstrate that they have committed adequate resources and taken sufficient measures to ensure the safety of nuclear activities so that the health and safety of the public will be adequately protected.**

Emergency Response and Intervention

- **In addition to general knowledge about nuclear technology, people that could be affected by an accident at a research reactor need to be informed of the potential hazards, and the series of actions that would be taken to protect them. This includes actions by the government and actions that the people themselves would need to take.**
- **There needs to be a basic level of knowledge among local citizens and the development of a suitable communication link with them to notify them if action is needed.**
- **The success of such a system will depend on actions taken by the operating organization, the regulator, and other government agencies and officials to establish and maintain an action plan.**
- **Testing of a plan through drills and evaluation sessions are an excellent way of helping the local citizens to understand the likely course of events in case of an accident.**

More on the Topic of Public Involvement

- **PUBLIC INFORMATION**
- **THE LICENSING PROCESS (PUBLIC HEARINGS)**
- **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**
- **THE PRIVACY ACT**



Public Information

- The NRC website www.nrc.org has a large number of brochures and facts sheets that can be downloaded.
- The ANS website www.ans.org has a large number of brochures that can be downloaded.
- Some utility websites have a large amount of helpful public information, A good example is Entergy Corporation, whose website is www.entergy-nuclear.com
- See also the World Nuclear Association website www.world-nuclear.org



THE U.S. LICENSING PROCESS and NRC PUBLIC HEARINGS

The USNRC conducts hearings on disputed matters involved in the licensing of nuclear reactors, nuclear materials, and nuclear materials facilities.

Who Can Participate in a Hearing?

Only those individuals or entities whose interests are affected by an NRC licensing or enforcement action may participate in hearings. (You must demonstrate that you will be affected by the proposed action.)

Q: How does a person participate in the NRC hearing process?

An eligible individual or entity can participate by

- requesting intervention and a hearing
- requesting an opportunity to make an oral limited appearance
- submitting a written limited appearance statement

U.S. Freedom of Information Act

The U.S. [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) is a Federal law that Congress established so that any person can submit a written request for access to records or information maintained by the Federal Government.

- In response to such written requests, Federal agencies must disclose the requested records, unless they are explicitly protected from disclosure by one or more of the FOIA exemptions and exclusions, such as classified national defense and foreign relations information, certain types of information compiled for law enforcement purposes, and trade secrets and other confidential business information.
- You cannot request information that would invade another person's privacy.
- You can only request records that already exist. You cannot request that the Federal government compile new records or do any data analysis.

U.S. Privacy Act

The Privacy Act (PA) is a Federal law that allows individuals to learn how the Federal Government collects, maintains, uses, and disseminates records containing personal information, such as medical records and radiation monitoring data.

- It also safeguards confidentiality by limiting or restricting disclosure of personally identifiable records maintained by Federal agencies.**
- The PA allows individuals to gain access to their own personal records (unless the requested records are exempted from disclosure), and it allows individuals to seek correction or amendment of Federally maintained records that are inaccurate, incomplete, untimely, or irrelevant.**
- The FOIA is a companion to the PA, which balances the Government's need for information about individuals with the need to protect those individuals against unwarranted invasions of their privacy by Federal agencies stemming from the collection, maintenance, use, and disclosure of personal information.**

Exercise on Public Involvement

Use the Internet to identify the following sources of information about nuclear technology:

- **International Atomic Energy Agency:** www.iaea.org
- **OECD Nuclear Energy Agency:** www.nea.fr
- **Union of Concerned Scientists:** www.ucsusa.org
- **U.S. Department of Energy:** www.energy.gov
- **American Nuclear Society:** www.ana.gov
- **Greenpeace:** www.greenpeace.org
- **World Nuclear Association:** www.world-nuclear.org
- **World Association of Nuclear Operators-WANO**
www.wano.org.uk

