

Decommissioning and the Disposal of Radioactive Waste and Residual Material arising from the Defence Nuclear Programme



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Introduction

1. As an owner and operator of nuclear reactors and weapons, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is committed to acting responsibly in respect of the management of radioactive waste and residual nuclear material.

In Defence, nuclear reactors are used to provide power for the electrical and propulsion systems on submarines.

Background

2. Within Defence, the vast majority of radioactive waste and residual nuclear material is generated from the Nuclear Programme. MOD activities account for less than 5% of the total radioactive material produced by the UK.

The "Nuclear Programme" includes all activities which support both the nuclear powered submarine and nuclear weapon programmes. It does not include other Defence activities which use the attributes of radioactive materials, eg for medical purposes.

Commitment

3. To comply with relevant legislation, guidelines and national policy, the MOD will:

- ◆ Scope all current and future liabilities associated with the Nuclear Programme and produce relevant contingency plans.

Current and Future Liabilities

The current and future liabilities of the Nuclear Programme are equipments, (eg. nuclear powered submarines and nuclear weapons) and facilities (eg. elements of Devonport Dockyard and the Atomic Weapon Establishment Aldermaston) for which, sometime in the future, we will need to be able to fund decommissioning and disposal activities.

- ◆ Work with Other Government Departments (OGDs) and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to develop coherent and complementary policies and strategies to fulfil our responsibilities.

- ◆ Strive to be nationally self sufficient in decommissioning and disposal without compromising national security.
- ◆ Give due regard to the environment, including avoiding or minimising the generation of radioactive waste and residual nuclear material.
- ◆ Ensure worker and public safety.
- ◆ Use resources effectively, efficiently and economically.
- ◆ Produce and maintain a decommissioning and disposal strategy for the MOD's nuclear programme, ensuring that, for all activities involving radioactive materials, the method of eventual disposal has been considered and resources identified from the outset.
- ◆ Conform to the Environment Agency's "Radioactive Substances Regulation and Environmental Principles" and follow the Environment Agency's risk screening and appraisal methods.

4. The MOD has agreed (with the approval of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate) to decommission and defuel nuclear powered submarines as soon as practicable after they have been taken out of service.

The defuelling of nuclear powered submarines will be conducted in Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth using a purpose built facility.

5. Submarines which have left Naval service are defuelled and stored safely afloat. The development of a solution for submarine disposal is being considered as part of the Interim Storage of Laid-Up Submarines (Project ISOLUS).

Conclusion

6. As a responsible nuclear owner and operator, the MOD understands and is fully committed to fulfilling its responsibilities regarding the decommissioning and disposal of radioactive waste and residual nuclear material arising from the Nuclear Programme. Whilst in no way underestimating the task ahead, the MOD remains confident that, in conjunction with OGDs and NGOs, it is able to deliver the responsibilities set out in this fact sheet.

Current and Future Liabilities

