

RF Activities and Publications

Communication and learning within the forum is by way of studies and surveys on regulatory issues, often with the support of specialised parties of the RWMC, through annual meetings and workshops on themes of particular interest to regulators, and through exchange of information with other NEA committees, such as the Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities.

At **regular meetings** information is exchanged on national developments, study findings are discussed, and topical sessions allow members and outside speakers to address a central issue from many perspectives. Mandates may be given to subgroups to carry out specific work.

At **workshops** specific topics are dealt with in depth, taking advantage of a wide range of expertise beyond traditional

regulatory or technical specialists. Participants also have the opportunity to learn about the host country's waste management programme and its national context.

The RF has a policy of producing **documents for wide distribution**. Typically these address the development and refinement of the regulatory system with a view to improve regulation and regulatory practice, to illustrate the nature of the underlying issues, and to further establish the forum as an important source for regulatory guidance.

Publications and reports of the RF are available for downloading from the RF website at www.nea.fr/html/rwm/regulator-forum.html

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WE OWE IT TO OURSELVES AND TO FUTURE GENERATIONS TO DEAL WITH RADIOACTIVE WASTE IN A SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE MANNER. THE REGULATORS HAVE A MISSION IN THE SERVICE OF THE PUBLIC TO ENSURE THAT SAFE AND SOUND PRACTICES ARE ADOPTED FOR THE PROTECTION OF PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH OPEN AND TRANSPARENT DECISIONS.



SAFE MANAGEMENT
OF RADIOACTIVE
MATERIALS AND WASTE

RF mandate & profile

The Regulators' Forum (RF) of the NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) is a well-established forum of senior regulators for radioactive waste management and decommissioning. The RF was established in 1998 and current representation brings together regulatory bodies from 17 OECD countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Norway, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States of America. Both nuclear and environmental safety authorities are represented. All members of the forum are also members of the RWMC.

The forum provides its members with an opportunity for open discussion and learning about national experience and good practice in regulation with a view to refinement of the regulatory systems in this field. The forum promotes exchange of experience with other NEA committees and international organizations, and

maintains a strong interaction with the specialised working parties of the RWMC. Effective interaction is promoted at RF meetings and workshops between regulators, implementers, R&D specialists, policy-makers and social scientists.

Since its inception the RF has been examining the nature of the regulatory system and how the regulatory function is fulfilled. In the technical area, the RF has particular interest in regulatory criteria and the regulatory aspects and safety implications of waste retrievability provisions, optimisation, and long-term monitoring of geological repositories as well as emerging regulatory practices in the field of decommissioning. In the area of regulation and society, the RF recognises the importance of keeping abreast of the ethical issues associated with our responsibilities to current and future generations as well as the evolving societal expectations regarding the role of regulators. ■

RWMC-RF

Radioactive Waste Management Committee – Regulators' Forum

AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF
THE NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY (NEA)
A SPECIALISED AGENCY OF
THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)



Milestones and key studies

1997

CORDOBA WORKSHOP

"Regulating the Long-term Safety of Radioactive Waste Disposal"

1998

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RWMC REGULATORS' FORUM

2003

THE REGULATOR'S EVOLVING IMAGE AND ROLE

2005

THE REGULATORY FUNCTION

2006-2007

PARIS WORKSHOP AND STUDY REPORT

Understanding of the objectives and bases of long-term safety criteria

2008

EMERGING ISSUES AND PRACTICES IN DECOMMISSIONING REGULATION

2009

TOKYO WORKSHOP

"Transparent, Proportionate, and Deliverable Regulation for Geologic Disposal"

The Regulatory System

Regulatory functions are carried out not only by technical regulatory authorities, but involve, especially at the policy level, other bodies such as Parliament, Government, and regional authorities. Also, there may be more than one technical authority issuing guidance, taking part in licensing, and carrying out control and supervision. The RF has found that the elements associated with a regulatory system may be conveniently depicted as a cycle that embraces the principle of continuous improvement as illustrated in the diagram.

Current Topical Areas

Within the four main areas of the regulatory cycle, and taking the major responsibilities of the technical authorities into account, the RF focuses its programmes as follows:

- **Policy, objectives, and independent advice** Emphasis is placed on aspects of policy where input from regulatory authorities is expected to have significant weight, e.g. in the elaboration of national plans for the long-term management of spent fuel and radioactive waste.
- **Regulations/rulemaking and associated guidance** Emphasis is placed on the regulatory aspects of the operational phase of a repository, practical aspects of repository regulation for the long term, and regulating

legacy and non-fuel cycle waste.

- **Pre-licensing and licensing** Emphasis is placed on the regulator-implementer dialogue, definition and implementation of the concepts of Best Available Techniques, and optimisation for geological repositories.
- **Supervision and control** Emphasis is placed on the supervision of decommissioning projects and on the waste acceptance process. A special area is the oversight of the arrangements on the costing and funding of radioactive waste management and decommissioning and the role of the regulator.

The Regulatory Function

The RF comparative study of regulation of radioactive waste management in NEA member countries shows that there is no unique or best way to deliver the various elements of the regulatory cycle. The formal structures and organizational arrangements depend on the national constitutional structure, legal and institutional framework, and, to a large extent, on national regulatory culture, e.g. expectations on how prescriptive regulation should be. In most cases, major regulatory decisions emerge only after co-ordination of a wide range of relevant and authoritative inputs, e.g., from central Government

departments and other governmental technical authorities, from local communities, and from independent advisory bodies or commissions. [see The Regulatory Function and Radioactive Waste Management: International Overview. (NEA-6041, 2005)]

Regulating Long-term Waste Management

Specific attention has been given so far to the regulatory criteria for the long-term performance of geological disposal. The RF studies have shown differences between national radiological criteria that are difficult to explain in simple terms to the general public. The study of long-term regulatory criteria has introduced elements of ethical consideration and of social acceptance. Ethical issues arise because of the long timescales involved and the impossibility of guaranteeing contemporaneous regulatory control over such periods of time. The RF studies observe that our capacity to secure delivery of any defined standard for protection diminishes with time, which raises technical and ethical questions about what we should and can deliver and over what timescales. Sustainability and our obligations to future generations are subjects of central consideration

in national policies of long-lived waste disposal and are aspects of great importance to regulatory bodies. [see Regulating the Long-term Safety of Geological Disposal: Towards a Common Understanding of the Main Objectives and the Bases of Safety Criteria. (NEA-6182, 2007)]

Regulating Decommissioning

Decommissioning of disused nuclear facilities involves both conventional and radiological hazards. For the RF, important issues include authorisations during the dismantling process, the disassembly of large components, and the management of all materials. Specific attention has been given so far to adapting regulatory practice to the dynamic work environment and the changing risk profile of a facility undergoing dismantling. One emerging practice involves greater use of internal authorisation systems for plant modifications of minor safety significance, with a first level of oversight by an independent committee established by the plant operator. In this situation regulatory resources are focussed on issues that are most important for safety. [see Regulating the Decommissioning of Nuclear Facilities: Relevant Issues and Emerging Practices. (NEA-6401, 2008)]

The Regulator's Evolving Role

In the areas of rulemaking, control and supervision of nuclear installations, the roles and responsibilities of regulators traditionally include the following core tasks: identification of regulatory options, evaluation of their consequences under different conditions, and making choices among these options. The regulator then communicates these choices, and the bases for its decisions, to the affected parties. In today's context it has become increasingly important for the regulators to maintain transparent processes that are open to scrutiny and to serve as sources of information and expertise to local communities. Regulators provide stakeholders with understandable explanations of the mechanisms of regulatory oversight and decision making, including the opportunities for stakeholder participation. [see The Regulator's Evolving Role and Image in Radioactive Waste Management (NEA-4428, 2003)]. ■

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