

Radioactive waste management and decommissioning at the NEA

The NEA seeks to assist its member countries in developing safe, sustainable and societally acceptable strategies for the management of all types of radioactive materials, with particular emphasis on the management of long-lived waste and spent fuel and on decommissioning of disused nuclear facilities. The programme of work in these areas is carried out for the most part by the [Radioactive Waste Management Committee \(RWMC\)](#) assisted by three working parties:

- the [Forum on Stakeholder Confidence \(FSC\)](#)
- the [Integration Group for the Safety Case \(IGSC\)](#), and
- the [Working Party on Management of Materials from Decommissioning and Dismantling \(WPDD\)](#)

Other NEA Committees also have interests in this field; the [Committee on Radiation Protection and Public Health \(CRPPH\)](#) and the [Nuclear Development Committee \(NDC\)](#).

Composition and mandate of the RWMC

The NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) is a long-established international committee of senior representatives from regulatory authorities, radioactive waste management and decommissioning organisations, policy making bodies, and research-and-development institutions from the NEA countries. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) participates in the work of the RWMC, and the European Commission (EC) is a full member of the Committee. The RWMC maintains strong ties with national high-level advisory bodies to governments and with transnational bodies such as the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). Collaboration also takes place with the Governance directorate of the OECD.

The purpose of the RWMC is to support international co-operation in the management of material from nuclear installations, including facility decommissioning and long-term waste management. The Committee implements a programme of work that:

- fosters a shared and broad-based understanding of the state of the art and emerging issues;
- facilitates the elaboration of waste management strategies that respect societal requirements;
- helps to provide common bases to the national regulatory frameworks;
- enables the management of radioactive waste and materials to benefit from progress of scientific and technical knowledge, e.g., through joint projects and specialist meetings;
- contributes to knowledge consolidation and transfer, e.g., through the publication of technical reports, consensus statements and short flyers; and

- helps to advance best practice, e.g., by supporting international peer reviews.

The regulator members of the RWMC also participate in a separate [Regulators' Forum \(RWMC RF\)](#) through which they discuss and report on topics of specific regulatory interest and which determines, where appropriate, how such issues are progressed within the full Committee.

Overview of recent RWMC initiatives and products

- The latest collective statement of the RWMC dates to 2008 on “moving forward with geological disposal of radioactive waste”¹;
- The latest peer review is that of Dossier 2005, the national French study for the geological disposal of long-lived high- and medium-level radioactive waste;
- The RWMC holds multi-stakeholder national workshops from which important lessons have been drawn. The latest workshop (April 2009) was in France, in the siting region for the national HLW repository;
- The RWMC manages a database of country information, in the form of a 30-page country reports and 10-page country profiles²; a summary of the regulatory infrastructure in NEA countries is also maintained³;
- Work areas currently being addressed include: (a) promoting greater understanding of radioactive waste management and decommissioning disciplines; (b) an international project on the topic of “retrievability and reversibility” culminating in an international conference in Reims (France) in Dec. 2010; (c) assisting the organisation of an “International Conference on Geological Repositories” in Japan in 2011 (follow-on to the Berne conference of 2007); (d) initiating dialogue with ICRP which is intended to lead to the revision of ICRP guidance in the field of disposal; (e) initiating a project on long term information and memory preservation;
- Current technical and conceptual topics in the field of disposal include: optimization, dealing with very long time scales, assessing the state of the art in safety assessment methods, and the operation phase of repositories;
- Current decommissioning topics include: the management of large components, research and development needs, standardization of reporting norms for decommissioning cost estimates and cost control on decommissioning projects;
- Current study areas in societal confidence include: the interests and roles of regional authorities, how to increase the knowledge base of journalists, providing added value (beyond economic benefits) to communities hosting waste management facilities.

The list of documents produced by the RWMC and its working parties is wide and can be consulted via the web⁴. Attention is called to the provided links to 2-page flyers and to short brochures that are meant for easier download and consultation.

¹ http://www.nea.fr/html/rwm/RWMC_moving_flyer_USLetter_EN_sept08.pdf

² <http://www.nea.fr/html/rwm/profiles/welcome.html>

³ NEA (2009) *The Regulatory Infrastructure in NEA Member Countries*, online at <http://www.nea.fr/html/rwm/regulator-forum.html>

Overall, the RWMC is a unique multinational committee of specialists at the forefront in addressing both the technical and societal requirements for durable and sustainable waste management and decommissioning solutions. It provides a neutral forum where policy makers, regulators and implementing organisations can discuss issues of common interest and develop solutions that meet the diverse needs of its participants.

⁴ <http://www.nea.fr/html/rwm/Publicly%20Available%20NEA%20Documents%20from%202000.pdf>