



Office for
Nuclear Regulation

Regulating UK nuclear fuel cycle facilities under COVID-19 restrictions

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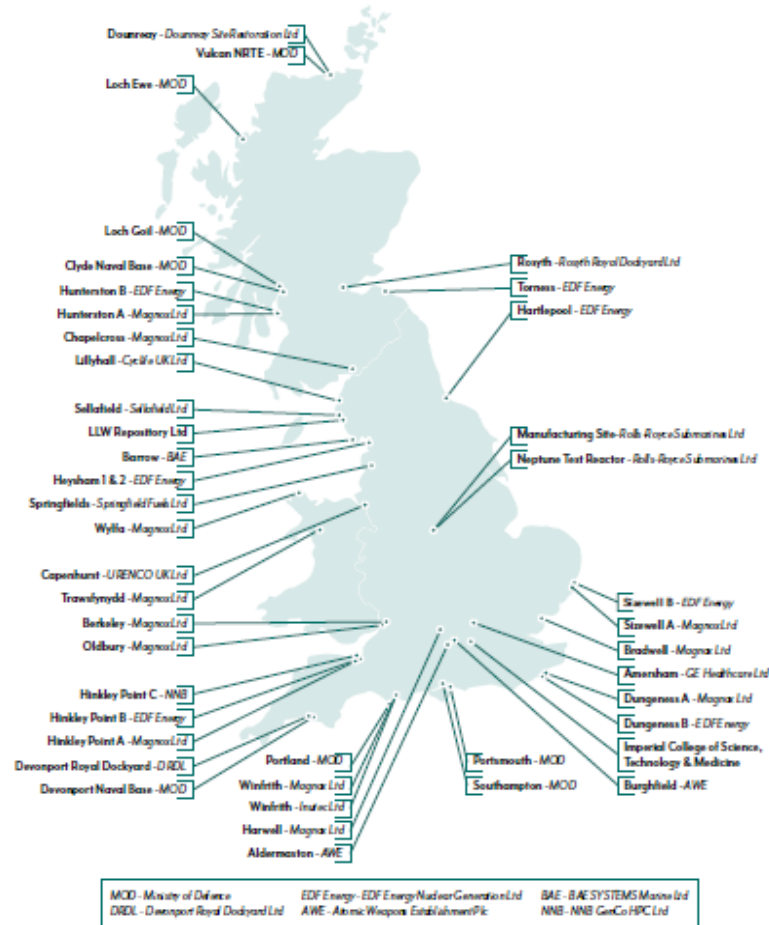
IAEA webinar - Maintaining nuclear safety of Nuclear Fuel Cycle Facilities during a pandemic

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Sites ONR regulates



Overview of ONR's general response to COVID-19 restrictions

- ONR has over 600 staff based in three offices.
- All staff moved to home working from 17th March. All but essential inspections /visits to sites suspended.
- ONR recovery working group developed the ONR Recovery Plan. A four stage plan: respond, re-plan, recover, re-shape. ONR is currently in stage 2, re-plan.
- ONR working from home arrangements have proven to be robust and effective. Focus includes mental wellbeing of staff and dealing rapidly with arising issues. Good feedback from staff.
- Clear lines of communication have been maintained throughout.

Overview of ONR's approach to regulating GB civil nuclear industry under COVID-19 restrictions

- ONR developed and implemented COVID-19-specific risk assessments and inspection guidance. ONR enforces relevant nuclear and conventional health and safety legislation- including COVID-19 requirements.
- ONR has worked closely with UK Government and nuclear site licensees in ensuring safety is maintained under COVID-19 restrictions; sharing learning with international bodies where appropriate.
- The focus remains on ensuring facilities operate safely and maintain legal compliance under COVID -19 restrictions. Working arrangements are proportional to the hazard and risks posed by the facilities. In general resilience of COVID-19, ONR has rebaselined its regulatory activities, particularly those on-site

Regulation during Stage 1: respond

- On-site work limited to urgent or essential regulatory business, in line with public health measures. This was to protect your health and to avoid undue burden on licensees during the initial stages of managing the impacts of the pandemic.
- Continue with regulatory assessment work and undertake some inspection remotely.
- Inspection plans revised and reduced where appropriate to take account of COVID-19 restrictions.

Regulation during Stage 2: re-plan

- As with stage 1, much of ONR's regulatory activities will continue remotely where practicable, with some limited, targeted, site-based inspections.
- ONR resumed targeted inspections to gain assurance that re-start plans / operating facilities consider all risks and reduce these so far as reasonably practicable (H&S legal requirement). Where appropriate, inspections will also provide evidence to support our decisions relating to key permissioning requests (ONR operates a permissioning regime for activities on regulated sites).

Regulating GB irradiated nuclear fuel reprocessing facility at Sellafield

- Initial focus on ensuring that safety is maintained on all facilities (operational and quiescent). Also operations are robust to current and postulated more severe COVID-19 restrictions and impact of COVID-19 on workforce.
- Worked with Licensee to safely reduce operation burden. For example, reducing or postponing maintenance activities.
- Inspectors rebaselined inspection plans, transitioning to remote inspections. Inspectors worked closely with the licensee's internal regulator. ONR senior inspectors sampled remote inspections to provide appropriate oversight and assurance, and also to identify learning.
- Permissioning work continued via remote interventions and audio/ video meetings with licensee staff.
- Inspectors investigated incidents on site mainly remotely, with some on-site investigations for higher safety significant events.

Conclusions

- Focus must be on continued safety & security of nuclear industry
- ONR satisfied in ability of industry to safely and securely discharge its undertakings during the current pandemic.
- Lessons internationally – Need to learn and share COVID-19 experience
 - Remote inspections – how to do efficiently, where are they applicable, benefits?
 - Staff training, testing and development – Within regulator and licensee
 - Evolution of regulator/licensee relationship – Greater trust?
 - Maintaining public confidence
- Preparedness for more onerous national and international pandemic scenarios .