



Information

NFLA media release, for immediate release, 11th June 2019

NFLA seek answers in silo structural incident at Hinkley Point C

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) has sought answers from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) after what appears to be quite a significant incident on the Hinkley Point site yesterday.

An investigation has been launched by the ONR and EDF Energy after a silo tower at the Hinkley Point C development sustained "structural damage" and released a large dust cloud around 7.30am on June 10th.

The silo tower is a 35-metre high structure that weighs around 5,000 tonnes. It is based at the concrete batching plant of the nuclear power station development. According to Somerset Live, the silo, which contains ground granulated blast furnace slag, is described as "important" by EDF Energy and plays a "pivotal role" in the station's construction by reusing the material within its concrete.

Photos on media outlets show a section of the silo has collapsed inwards. EDF is investigating what may have caused the damage. EDF have confirmed no workers were injured in the incident and the emergency services were not required to attend the incident. (1)

NFLA, the NGO representatives to the Chief Nuclear Regulator's Independent Safety Panel and a number of other groups, including the Nuclear Consulting Group, have asked the following questions of the ONR:

- Is the incident being deemed as a nuclear safety incident?
- Given that the storage silo contained 'ground granulated blast furnace slag', it is likely to include concentrations of dioxins. We would like to know what materials exactly were in the silo, and what the potential health impact may be.
- Did the storage silo contain waste including Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM)?
- Did the storage silo include mud containing alpha radiation emitting plutonium particles?

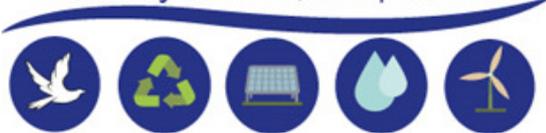
The ONR have responded that it was not a nuclear safety incident, which has led to three follow-up questions:

- Was there were any potential nuclear safety consequences from the accident? In other words, if things has played out in a different way, could there have been a nuclear risk (e.g. from debris damaging a nuclear facility). Could you advise on this please?
- How did ONR establish that there were "no nuclear safety consequences" from the silo collapse?
- Did ONR send any inspector to the site, or did it rely on assurances from EDF?

The organisations are waiting for responses on these matters and have asked for a swift response to their queries. Whilst it is clear EDF are suggesting this is a low risk incident, the pictures of the storage silo and the spreading of a dust cloud likely to have spread over the site and further afield may well have health consequences for workers and the wider public. NFLA hope answers to these questions are provide forthwith.

NFLA remain concerned that the Hinkley Point C development has had extensive construction activity during the lockdown created by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has closed down much of the wider economy. It has always seemed an anomaly that construction sites were given exemption from the lockdown, and certainly there remains concern over how safe social distancing can be effectively undertaken over such a large and complicated site.

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NFLA note that the construction sector has a higher rate of coronavirus deaths than most other sectors, according to figures from the Office of National Statistics show.

Low-skilled construction workers had a death rate of 25.9 deaths per 100,000 males, making it one of the most affected professions in the country. (2) NFLA argues this statistic showed the importance of curtailing such work during a pandemic for the safety of its workforce. It remains disappointed that EDF Energy continued this work during such a profound public health emergency, and that the ONR, the local authority and the emergency services, and above all the UK Government, permitted it to take place.

NFLA Steering Committee Chair, Councillor David Blackburn added:

“This looks to NFLA like quite a serious incident on the Hinkley Point C site. A storage silo has been clearly damaged and some of that material has been released in a dust cloud over the site and potentially further afield. NFLA wants to know what material has been released and the health consequences from the dust cloud, and above all why the silo structure has collapsed. Of course, if such construction work on site had been halted as part of the lockdown from the Covid-19 outbreak then this accident may not have happened. Construction workers and the wider public have been potentially put at risk by allowing the reactor work to keep going during this public health emergency. NFLA hopes the queries made of the nuclear regulator are responded to as quickly as possible and that we fully understand what happened yesterday.”

Ends - for more information please contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary, on 00 44 (0)161 234 3244.

Notes for Editors:

- (1) Somerset Live, 10th June https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/hinkley-point-c-dust-cloud-4210733?_ga=2.119323983.751970057.1591874421-814010539.1583757382#source=push
- (2) Building.co.uk, 11th May <https://www.building.co.uk/news/male-construction-workers-among-hardest-hit-from-covid-deaths-ons-says/5105936.article>