

Science Project: Clean up and techniques applicable to reduction of discharges from decommissioning

Summary P3-106/S

In 2002 the Government published a White Paper (Managing the Nuclear Legacy) setting out its proposals for restructuring the Nuclear Industry. It wishes to improve the management arrangements for the safe, secure and cost effective clean up of the industry in a way that protects the environment for the benefit of current and future generations. A new body, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, is to be charged with the responsibility of driving through the clean up.

Over coming years a number of nuclear sites used for research and development, power generation and fuel cycle activities (including reprocessing) will need to be cleaned up. The activities involved in decommissioning will produce wastes including discharges that need to be managed. This work will be done against the background of a Government Strategy to progressively reduce radioactive discharges but which recognises the need to serve the safe and timely cleanup of the legacy of radioactive waste.

Following the reduction to date in headroom between discharges and authorised limits from operational plants some operators have pointed to the possible future need for increased discharges, albeit for a limited period, to enable them to decommission. Thus the Agency may receive applications seeking variations to authorisations to include increases in discharge limits.

The Agency will challenge any proposal for the use of decommissioning techniques that result in increased discharges. It wishes to have the most up-to date relevant information available on which to base its acceptance of proposals from the industry and give regard to the concepts of the best practicable environmental option and best practicable means.

Hence the provision has been sought of an easily searchable database containing relevant details of decommissioning techniques including information on their technical maturity and illustrative examples of their use and providing information on the resulting discharges. It is for use on their PCs by the Agency's regulatory staff when considering relevant proposals from the nuclear industry.

The database prepared by RM-Consultants through a small contract is now available to all Agency staff. The covering report describes the way in which it has been prepared.

The database is straightforward to interrogate and provides information on a range of some sixty techniques in use or under development in the nuclear industry and elsewhere.

To ensure the information provided is comprehensive and up-to date it is proposed to review the database on a periodic basis and revising it as necessary. While in no way dissatisfied with the initial report produced we aim to enhance it by contracts with different organisations to provide continuing technical audit and review.

This Summary relates to information from Science Project P3-106 (SC030165) reported in detail in the following output(s):-

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