

Briefing note

Radioactive Substances Regulation

Regulating defence sites Our role

There are four licensed nuclear sites in England and Wales that carry out a range of defence related activities from the manufacture and maintenance of nuclear weapons to the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of nuclear reactors used in nuclear powered submarines. It is our job to regulate these sites to make sure their discharges of radioactive waste do not pose a risk to people or the environment.

We regulate two different types of defence establishments; those run by contractors on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) (for example the Atomic Weapons Establishment) and the MoD directly (for example HM Naval Base at Devonport). Government departments are exempt from our direct regulation. We regulate the MoD site by ‘agreement’ and to the same standards as the rest of the nuclear industry.

We regulate radioactive waste disposals to the environment under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. We do this through authorisations that contain limits and conditions aimed at minimising waste and protecting the environment.

Atomic Weapons Establishment (Berkshire)

The Atomic Weapons Establishment plays a crucial role in the defence of the UK by manufacturing and maintaining warheads for the country’s nuclear deterrent, Trident.

A civilian contractor AWE plc carries out this work on behalf of the MoD at two sites;



Aldermaston and Burghfield. We authorise the radioactive waste discharges made by AWE plc.

Devonport (Devon)

Devonport consists of two parts: HM Naval Base (HMNB), which is owned and operated by the MoD, and Devonport Royal Dockyard owned by Devonport Royal Dockyard Limited (DRDL). DRDL refits, refuels, repairs and maintains the Royal Navy’s nuclear powered submarines.

We authorise the radioactive waste discharges made by DRDL and approve the disposal of radioactive waste discharges from the Naval Base.

Rolls Royce (Derby)

Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations Limited carries out design, development, testing and manufacture of nuclear-powered submarine fuel at its two adjacent sites in Derby.

We authorise the radioactive waste discharges made by Rolls-Royce Marine Power Operations Limited.



BAE Systems (Barrow in Furness, Cumbria)

BAE Systems operates a nuclear licensed site within a commercial shipyard at Barrow in Furness, Cumbria. The site builds, tests and commissions nuclear submarines in support of the MoD's nuclear submarine programme. We authorise the radioactive waste discharges made by BAE Systems.

Our role

At all the sites we regulate, operators must have a permit from us to dispose of their radioactive waste. Through permits, we regulate the operators of these sites against a strict set of terms and conditions.

Our authorisations require operators to:

- keep all discharges within limits
- minimise discharges even if they are well below limits
- make sure relevant equipment is adequately maintained
- have properly trained and experienced staff
- keep and provide samples
- keep sufficient samples
- provide any information we require

We ensure compliance by:

- routine inspections
- scrutinising discharge returns and records
- reviewing authorisations and varying them as appropriate
- investigating incidents
- using enforcement as necessary

- making our own analyses of effluent
- monitoring the environment

We also regulate these operators, where appropriate, against other regulatory regimes, including Control of Major Accident Hazards, Environmental Permitting Regulations and the Water Resources Act.

Further information

For further information visit our website (<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/nuclear>).

You can use our interactive maps at <http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby> to find out more about the environment where you live.

About this briefing

This briefing is part of a series which highlight our work in the area of regulating radioactive substances. Our other briefings include: Regulating radioactive substances - our role, Nuclear Regulation Group - our role, Non-nuclear permitting, Assessing radiation doses and Managing radioactive waste.

You can find these briefings by typing 'rsr' in the keyword search on our publications catalogue (<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk>).

For further information visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk/nuclear