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| ONR Site Report  AWE – Aldermaston and Burghfield |



ONR Site Report

AWE - Aldermaston and Burghfield

Report for period: 1 September 2023 to 30 March 2024

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Approved by: Head of Weapons Regulation

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Foreword

This report is issued as part of our commitment to make information about inspection and regulatory activities relating to the above site available to the public. Reports are distributed to members for the AWE Local Liaison Committee and are also available on our website <http://www.onr.org.uk/llc/>.

Our site inspectors usually attend AWE Local Liaison Committee meetings where these reports are presented and will respond to any questions raised there. Any person wishing to inquire about matters covered by this report should contact us via email at contact@onr.gov.uk.

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# Inspections

## Date(s) of Inspection

Our site inspectors made inspections on the following dates during the report period 1 September 2023 to 30 March 2024:

6 to 7, 19 to 20 & 28 September

2to 4 October

6 - 9 & 23 November

4 – 7 & 16 December

12 -13 March

# Routine Matters

## Inspections

Inspections are undertaken as part of the process for monitoring compliance with:

* the conditions attached by ONR to the nuclear site licence granted under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (NIA65) (as amended);
* the Energy Act 2013;
* the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA74); and
* regulations made under HSWA74, for example the Ionising Radiations Regulations 2017 (IRR17) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR99).

The inspections entail monitoring the licensee’s actions on the site in relation to incidents, operations, maintenance, projects, modifications, safety case changes and any other matters that may affect safety. The licensee is required to make and implement adequate arrangements under the conditions attached to the licence to ensure legal compliance. Inspections seek to judge both the adequacy of these arrangements and their implementation.

* examination, maintenance, inspection and testing;
* management of operations including control and supervision;
* staff training, qualifications and experience;
* plant construction and/or commissioning;
* radiological protection;
* radioactive waste management and decommissioning;
* fire safety;
* quality assurance and records;
* supply chain management;
* conventional (non-nuclear) health and safety; and
* emergency preparedness.

In the reporting period our inspectors have continued to work with the AWE Decommissioning team and AWE has now developed a viable plan for the programme of work to address the high hazard decommissioning activities. This will remain a key area of regulatory focus for the foreseeable future.

We have also undertaken further activities to assess AWE’s progress in delivering the safety improvements necessary to support the AWE Aldermaston site moving to a routine level of regulatory attention. The outcomes from those activities continue to be encouraging with the site having made significant improvements during the last six months. There remain a number of areas that will continue to be subject to regulatory focus over the next eight months. These areas are:

* Organisational Learning.
* Capacity and capability.
* Effective internal assurance [at all levels within the organisation].
* Supply chain management and demonstration of intelligent customer capability.
* Conventional health and safety (specifically construction safety).

We issued a Prohibition Notice to AWE on the 26 May 2022, prohibiting entry into a part of the Plutonium Technology Centre (PTC) classified as a “confined space” unless a safe system of work is in place.  AWE have developed a safe system of work to allow entry into this area and in parallel are working to modify the arrangement of the plant such that in future it would not be classified as a “confined space”. We will continue to engage with AWE to make sure that a) adequate arrangements are in place and b) that any proposed changes to the designation of that area of the plant are in line with the requirements of relevant regulations.

We provide advice to local planning authorities on any planning applications for developments around nuclear sites. The advice provided seeks to limit the radiological consequences to members of the public in the event of a nuclear emergency. Under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPIR), local authorities are required to put in place detailed off-site emergency planning arrangements.  The off-site plans are put in place to minimise and mitigate the health consequences of any significant radiological release that might occur as a result of an incident at the nuclear site.

As any proposed development in the vicinity of a licensed nuclear site could have an impact on the local emergency planning arrangements. Our advice on planning applications is informed by the views of local authority Emergency Planners. Local authorities are required to prepare plans for responding to an off-site nuclear emergency, within the detailed emergency planning zone (DEPZ).

In 2023 a privately-owned property development and investment company applied for planning permission for the erection of 32 dwellings including affordable housing, parking and landscaping on land to the rear of The Hollies, Reading Road, Burghfield. ONR, along with AWE and West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) emergency planning team objected on the grounds that this development potentially compromised delivery of the off-site emergency plan and the local planning authority refused planning permission. The applicant appealed against this decision and a planning inquiry was held in July 2023 by the planning inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ). This inquiry granted planning permission. Immediately following this, AWE, along with MoD and ourselves appealed to the high court against this decision. The key objection was that the Inspector failed to understand or take into account our specialist  technical evidence/advice as an expert statutory consultee or failed to give legally adequate reasons, for disagreeing with it.  Following submissions to the High Court the Planning Inspectorate agreed to quash their original decision and to constitute a new inquiry.

ONR, along with AWE, WBDC and other interested parties are gathering their evidence for this revised inquiry, the exact form of which is currently not determined.

Members of the public, who would like further information on our inspection activities during the reporting period, can view site Intervention Reports at [www.onr.org.uk/intervention-records](http://www.onr.org.uk./intervention-records).

Should you have any queries regarding our inspection activities, please email [contact@onr.gov.uk](mailto:contact@onr.gov.uk).

## Other Work

We continue to undertake a series of activities in support of the oversight and permissioning of significant programmes of work. The focus this reporting period includes:

* completion of construction and the preparations for commencement of commissioning activities within the new warhead facility [Burghfield].
* progressing decommissioning activities on the Aldermaston site.
* progressing facility improvement and capability up-lift projects on the Aldermaston site.

Our site inspectors continue to hold periodic meetings with the safety representatives within their operational areas, to support their function of representing employees and receiving information on matters affecting their health, safety, and welfare at work.

AWE has completed its response to our Chief Nuclear Inspectors’ industry-wide themed inspection on climate change and the on-site follow up inspection is planned for June 2024.

# Non-Routine Matters

Licensees are required to have arrangements to respond to non-routine matters and events. Our inspectors judge the adequacy of the licensee’s response, including actions taken to implement any necessary improvements.

Events of significant note during the period were as follows:

* On the 6 July 2023, AWE notified us that an incident had occurred on the Hub Construction Enclave resulting in significant injuries to two workers. One of these workers was airlifted to hospital where he subsequently died from his injuries. In accordance with the ‘death at work protocol’ Thames Valley Police were the lead agency for the ongoing investigation until December 2023, at which point primacy was handed over to us. We are now undertaking our own investigation into the incident. We are not in a position to provide any further information at this stage.
* XTC has had a recent increase in the number of events, the majority of which are concerned with explosives safety and compliance. It is not sufficiently clear at this stage whether these events are linked. However, they are indicators of drift and can be grouped as ‘deviations in standards and behaviours’. We are content that AWE took immediate action and the necessary precautions to prevent reoccurrence and where necessary is currently undertaking an independent investigation. Follow up of these events will be part of future normal regulatory interactions by us (supported by HSE explosives specialists).

# Regulatory Activity

We may issue formal documents to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Under nuclear site licence conditions, we issue regulatory documents, which either permit an activity or require some form of action to be taken; these are usually collectively termed ‘Licence Instruments’ (LIs) but can take other forms. In addition, inspectors may take a range of enforcement actions, to include issuing an enforcement notice.

* The following Licence Instrument has been issued during the period:

**Table 1: Licence Instruments and Enforcement Notices Issued by ONR during this period.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Type | Ref. No. | Description |
| 19 December 2023 | Licence Instrument 551 | ONRW-2019369590-5748 | Agreement to proceed with implementation of AWE modification proposal ACR-02213: A\*\* Process Line Modifications. |

Reports detailing the above regulatory decisions can be found on our website <http://www.onr.org.uk/pars/>.

# News from ONR

For the latest news and information from us, please read and subscribe to our regular email newsletter ‘ONR News’ at [www.onr.org.uk/onrnews](http://www.onr.org.uk/onrnews).

# Contacts

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