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| ONR Site Report  AWE – Aldermaston and Burghfield |



ONR Site Report

AWE – Aldermaston and Burghfield

Report for period: 1 October 2022 – 31 January 2023

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Approved by: Head of Weapons Regulation

Issue No.: 1

Publication Date: Apr-23

ONR Record Ref. No.: 2023/10458

Foreword

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

Site inspectors from ONR 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 ONR.

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# Inspections

## Date(s) of Inspection

The ONR site inspector made inspections on the following dates during the report period 1 October 2022 to 31 January 2023:

10 - 13 October

19 - 20 October

24 – 26 October

7 – 10 November

23 November

1 December

5 – 8 December

9 – 12 January

18 January

25 January

# 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 in order to ensure legal compliance. Inspections seek to judge both the adequacy of these arrangements and their implementation.

In this period, routine inspections of AWE at Aldermaston and Burghfield covered the following:

* examination, maintenance, inspection and testing;
* management of operations including control and supervision;
* staff training, qualifications and experience;
* emergency preparedness;
* radioactive waste management;
* decommissioning;
* organisational capability, culture and organisational changes;
* conventional (non-nuclear) health and safety;
* assurance and governance;
* management of modifications to existing plant.

In the reporting period ONR inspectors attended site to assess the Level 1 Site Safety Demonstration Exercises at the Aldermaston Site [12 Oct] and Burghfield Site [7 Dec]. Both exercises were based on challenging scenarios, particularly with regards casualty management and recovery, and provided the opportunity to stretch AWE’s emergency response arrangements. Both exercises were assessed as meeting the regulatory requirements of LC11(5) [Emergency arrangements] and Regulation 12 of the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019.

ONR continues to seek assurance that the Aldermaston site’s response to the shortfalls in confined space arrangements, resulting in the Prohibition Notice reported at the last LLC, are progressing in a manner that will deliver the required regulatory requirements.

ONR has 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 have been encouraging with the site having made significant improvements over the last 12 months. As a result, ONR has closed out the associated Level 1 Regulatory Issue and is remains content that AWE remains on track to return to a routine level of regulatory attention.

Members of the public, who would like further information on ONR’s 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) on our website [www.onr.org.uk](http://www.onr.org.uk).

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

## Other Work

ONR continues 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];
* preparations for construction and commissioning of the new nuclear material store;
* progressing decommissioning activities on the Aldermaston site;
* progressing facility improvement and capability up-lift projects on the Aldermaston site.

ONR 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.

# Non-Routine Matters

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

The only event of particular note during the period was:

* On the 25 Oct, AWE notified ONR that the Nitrogen supply to one of the operational glovebox lines within the Plutonium Technology Centre had been isolated for an extended period potentially exposing the interior of the glovebox to atmosphere. This has been rated as a Level 1 event [Anomally] on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES) due to the failure of a principal line of defence. There was no challenge to primary containment which has been maintained at all times by the ventilation system in that area. In addition, all bulk material remains within containers within the gloveboxes. ONR is satisfied that AWE’s response to the incident has been conducted in accordance with its arrangements, which we have assessed as adequate. AWE is conducting its own investigation into the event, which is still ongoing to date; ONR will await the outcome form this investigation prior to undertaking any further enquiries.

# Regulatory Activity

ONR may issue formal documents to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Under nuclear site licence conditions, ONR issues 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.

* No LIs, Enforcement Notices or Enforcement letters were issued during this period.

In December 2021, ONR issued AWE with an Enforcement Letter, ONR-EL-21-033 in response to the inadequate management of radioactive waste. The actions resulting from that Enforcement Letter were progressed via a Level 3 Regulatory Issue RI-10469. AWE have addressed the actions associated with this Regulatory Issue which has been closed via ONR’s formal governance arrangements. Correspondingly, Enforcement Letter ONR-EL-21-033 has also been closed out.

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

# News from ONR

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

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