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| ONR Site Report  AWE – Aldermaston and Burghfield |



ONR Site Report

AWE - Aldermaston and Burghfield

**Report for period**: 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

**Authored by**: Nominated Site Inspector

**Approved by**: Head of Regulation - Weapons

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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 for the AWE Local Liaison Committee and are also available on the ONR website (<https://www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/llcssg-reports/>).

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

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

Dates on site.

9, 10-11 April

15 May

5, 15 & 28 June

9-10 & 11July

13-14, 13-15 & 14 August

10-11, 11-12 & 14 September.

# 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 Nuclear Liabilities team who have demonstrated a sustained programme of high hazard reduction, and we expect to close the L2 Decommissioning Programme Regulatory issue in the next reporting period.

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. One of those activities was to undertake a leadership of organisational capability review, which took place on 5 June. The outcome of that review supported close out of the L2 Regulatory Issue for capability and capacity. The outcomes from all our activities in delivering safety improvements continues to be encouraging and we will undertake our final internal review in November and a decision will be made about whether AWE will move out of enhancing regulatory attention. We will inform AWE of our decision in December.

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. Aligned to the PTC Enhance Project Period (EPP) AWE has developed a safe system of work (SSoW) 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 our regular engagments with AWE in the lead up to the start of EPP to ensure the SSoW is in place before the EPP begins.

We provide advice to local planning authorities on any planning applications for developments around nuclear sites. 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.

In 2023 an application was received for planning permission for 32 dwellings on land to the rear of The Hollies, Reading Road, Burghfield. Along with AWE and West Berkshire District Council (WBDC) emergency planning team we objected to the application on the grounds that this development potentially compromised delivery of the off-site emergency plan. the application was refused planning permission by the local planning authority. The applicant appealed the decision and a planning inquiry was held in July 2023 by the Planning Inspectorate. 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 Planning Inspectorate 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.

A new planning inquiry for this development was held in September 2024. Along with AWE WBDC and other interested parties we provided evidence. It is anticipated the Planning Inspectorate will report in late 2024/early 2025.

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.

We undertook the Chief Nuclear Inspectors themed inspection on climate change at site on the 28 June. This was a themed inspection to understand AWE’s approach to climate change and how AWE is managing climate change and to identify learning based on the evidence sampled. We judged that AWE broadly meets our expectations in relation to climate change.

# 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. Our investigation is nearing its conclusion but we are not in a position to provide any further information at this stage.
* AWE reported an event to us that took place in the Explosives Tehncolgy Centre (XTC) facility in April 2024. Our site inspector undertook follow up enquiries which identified a breach of the explosives liecence. We reviewed and processed the information through our Enforcement Management Model (EMM) and the recommended enforcement action was a ‘holding to account meeting’ (HTA). That meeting took place on 23 July 2024 at our Cheltenham office. As part of the HTA meeting a series of commitments were made by the AWE Chief Operating Officer (COO) and were agreed by us in support of an enabling approach to both restoring and improving compliance but also mitigating the likelihood of re-occurance. Whilst we remain supportive of the commitments and changes being made to improve safety performance across XTC operations, there has been a further event, and we are currently reviewing the details of that event to identify what, if any further enforcement action is required.

# 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.

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 ONR, please read and subscribe to our regular email newsletter ‘ONR News’ at <https://www.onr.org.uk/news/newsletter/>.

# Contacts

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# References

**There are no sources in the current document.**