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| ONR site report  AWE – Aldermaston and Burghfield |



ONR site report

AWE - Aldermaston and Burghfield

**Report for period**: 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025

**Authored by**: Nominated Site Inspector

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

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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: [www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/llcssg-reports](http://www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/llcssg-reports).

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](mailto:contact@onr.gov.uk).

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# Inspections

## Date(s) of inspection

Our site inspectors made inspections on the following dates during the reporting period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025:

8 October 2024

12 November 2024

12 December 2024

11 February 2025

12 March 2025

# Routine matters

2.1 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 and have successfully closed the Level 2 Decommissioning Programme Regulatory issue.

We also undertook 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 all our activities in delivering safety improvements continued to be encouraging and we were satisfied that AWE has clearly demonstrated positive steps forward in terms of leadership, organisational capability, decision-making, and internal assurance and challenge, which have allowed us to return AWE to routine regulatory attention.

We informed AWE of our decision, and a press brief was released on the 6 March 2025 to that effect. With the move of AWE to routine attention, our ongoing regulatory activity at Aldermaston will focus on ensuring the improvements in safety performance at the site continue via our regulatory enabling approach.

We issued a Prohibition Notice to AWE on the 26 May 2022, prohibiting entry into 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 engagement with AWE in the lead up to the start of EPP to ensure the SSoW is in place before the EPP begins.

At the time of the previous LLC, I reported that a new planning inquiry for the Hollies development was held in September 2024. Along with AWE, West Berkshire Council (WBC) and other interested parties we provided evidence to the new planning inquiry, who have made the decision to allow the development to go ahead. We will continue to provide advice to local planning authorities on any planning applications for developments around nuclear sites.

## Members of the public who would like further information on our inspection activities

## during the reporting period can view site inspection records on our website: [www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/inspection-records](http://www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/inspection-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:

* ompletion 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 is progressing its ‘Enduring Capability Review’ work to implement an organisational structure that best meets the needs of the business to deliver its future programme requirements, and to deliver a more efficient, resilient and flexible organisational capability. We have started our initial engagement on these organisational changes and will continue with these engagements as this piece of work develops.

# 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 worker was airlifted to hospital but later died from their injuries. In accordance with the death at work protocol, Thames Valley Police led the investigation until December 2023, when primacy transferred to ONR. Further information about the investigation will be shared as soon as we’re able to do so.
* Reported previously, AWE informed ONR of an event that took place in the Explosives Tehncolgy Centre (XTC) facility in April 2024, the outcme of that was a ‘holding to account meeting’ (HTA) with senior site representatives. Whilst we remained supportive of the commitments and changes being made at the HTA to improve safety performance across XTC operations, there was a further event in August 2024. ONR was informed of that event that took place in a facility at XTC, where an unplanned deviation occurred during the assembly of a trial, which resulted in damage to an explosive component. The damage was caused when workers failed to follow appropriate procedures when manually handling the explosive component.

No nuclear material was present in the facility at the time of the event, and no such material is ever present in the Explosive Technology Centre.Therefore, there was no risk to nuclear safety, the public or the environment due to the incident.

To determine the most appropriate enforcement decision in this scenario we applied ONR’s Enforcement Management Model. As a result of its considerations, we issued an improvement notice, and associated schedule, to remedy the contraventions of Sections 2(1) of the Health and Safety At Work etc. Act 1974, and Regulation 5 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. AWE must take action to correct these contraventions by the date specified in the improvement notice, Monday 20th August 2025. AWE took appropriate and timely action in response to the incident, and we will continue to engage with them during the period of the improvement notice to ensure positive progress is made to address this shortfall.

# 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 but can take other forms. In addition, inspectors may take a range of enforcement actions, to include issuing an enforcement notice.

* Table 1: Licence instruments and enforcement notices issued by ONR during this period

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Type | Reference | Description |
| 30/10/2024 | Improvement notice | ONR-IN-24-009 | Improvement notice ONR-IN-24-009 – Contraventions of Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, Section 2(1) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, Regulation 5 |

Reports detailing the above regulatory decisions can be found on our website: [www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/project-assessment-reports](http://www.onr.org.uk/publications/regulatory-reports/site-specific-reports/project-assessment-reports).

# News from ONR

For the latest updates and information on our work, please subscribe to our regular email newsletter, ONR News, at [www.onr.org.uk/news/newsletter](https://www.onr.org.uk/news/newsletter/).

# Contacts

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# References

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