

NDAWG Paper 3-06

Pilot Project to Examine the Feasibility, Effectiveness and Resource Implications of Presenting the Results of a Prospective Dose Assessment to the Public

Possible future radiation doses are estimated as part of the process of evaluating proposed discharges of radionuclides to the environment. Such prospective assessments form an important part of providing the FSA's input as statutory consultees in the authorisation of radioactive wastes at nuclear sites. In estimating prospective doses the emphasis is generally on those people in the population who are most exposed, usually known as the critical group. The results of such assessments are provided in technical reports which may be published or are included in the package of material provided as part of the public consultation on a proposed authorisation or revision to an authorisation. In 2000 the FSA held a consultative exercise on dose assessments (CEDA) which considered the methods of assessing the impact of radioactive discharges on the public. One point that arose through the consultative exercise was the need for information to be provided on radiation doses to the public that they could apply to their own lives. It was not felt that the current way of providing estimates of critical group doses was sufficient to enable individuals to determine what effect discharges may have on them. This would particularly be the case if a probabilistic dose assessment approach were to be adopted.

The aim of this project is to determine the extent to which members of the public are interested in obtaining information on their radiation doses; to identify feasible options for enabling members of the public to get an individual dose assessment; to consider the feasibility of presenting the results of prospective dose assessments to members of the public. This project is being done on a pilot study basis for two nuclear sites.

Two field trials will be carried out for each site to evaluate public interest and explore the broader issues associated with the provision of the data to the community, the first with members of the Local Liaison Committees, and the second with members of the public. A review was carried out to identify alternative ways in which members of the public could acquire an individual dose assessment. These options include a scenario based approach and a dose calculator for use by members of the public, and their relative merits will be explored through a separate technical focus group.

This project will supply a better understanding of the issues and evidence suggesting whether or not, and to what extent, the ability to determine personalised dose assessments would be welcomed. If welcomed, guidance as to how this could be done would be given. We would make recommendations on how results of dose assessments could best be presented to the public and the feasibility of doing this.