

Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Radiological Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC)  
Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Room 1 McCumiskey House.

**Members present:** Tom Ryan, EPA (Chair)  
Micheál Lehane, EPA  
Mary O'Mahony – Heath Service Executive  
Sean Curran – Medical Council  
Wayne Anderson – Food Safety Authority of Ireland  
Andrew Bolas – Dental Council  
John Upton – Irish Association of Physicist in Medicine  
Heinz Peter Nasheuer – Irish Radiation Research Society  
Michele Monahan – Irish Institute of Radiographers and  
Radiation Therapists  
Stephen Thomas – Environmental Pillar  
Susan McCready-Shea – Society of Radiological Protection  
Antony Bexon – UK Health Security Agency

**EPA staff in attendance:** Andy Fanning - Programme Manager  
Noel Byrne – Programme Manager  
Veronica Smith - Senior Scientist  
Noeleen Cunningham – Inspector  
David Fenton – Senior Manager

**Apologies:** John Tuffy – Health Information Quality Authority  
Helen Hourihane – Heath and Safety Authority  
Luis Leon Vintro - Royal Irish Academy  
Dr Paula Barry Walsh - Veterinary Council  
Carol Robinson – Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority  
RPA  
Gareth Thomas – UK Office of Nuclear Regulation  
Carole Rouse – Autorité de Sûreté Nucléair  
Paul Dorfman – Nuclear Free Local Authorities

**Secretary:** Catherine Scully

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr Tom Ryan, Director of the Office of Environmental Enforcement introduced himself as the new Chair to the Radiation Protection Advisory Committee (RPAC). He welcomed previous Committee members as well as new nominees. He welcomed Michele Monahan as the representative the Irish Institute of Radiographers and Radiation Therapists who were invited to nominate a member to RPAC for the first time. He outlined the purpose of the Committee, the revised Terms of Reference and that there would be one in person meeting and one virtual meeting of the Committee each year. The Chair then opened the floor for introductions.

There was a question from the floor about how the EPA is accountable to the government and to the public. The Chair explained that the EPA publishes an annual report each year, that EPA appears before various government Committees, for example, the Public Accounts Committee when requested. EPA also has a Performance Delivery Agreement with its parent department which is reviewed annually.

## **2. Exploring options for addressing radiation in building materials**

Andy Fanning outlined to the Committee the EPA's responsibility under the domestic regulations implementing the Basic Safety Standards Directive in relation to gamma radiation from building materials. EPA is obliged to identify building materials that, in terms of the emitted gamma radiation, may be of concern from a radiation protection point of view and to inform the Minister for Housing of any building material of concern. Some research has indicated that building materials are not of concern and were unlikely to give rise to any significant radiation exposure. Results obtained were also comparable with the results of similar studies undertaken in other countries. This research was undertaken a number of years ago and EPA has recently put out a research call to assist it in defining its approach to meeting this obligation under the Directive. In advance of the completion of the research EPA may test some building materials to look at any practical analytical issues that might arise. EPA asked the Advisory Committee for any views or suggestions members would have for the development of an appropriately scaled and targeted monitoring programme for emitted gamma radiation from building materials. There was a suggestion from the Committee to contact the Building Research Establishment in the UK to explore what is being done in the UK. The committee also recommend that a comprehensive literature review be undertaken to inform the monitoring programme.

## **3. National Emergency Exercise 2022 – outcome and actions**

Veronica Smith presented the outcome and actions from the national nuclear emergency exercise held in September 2022. Because Ireland is a non-nuclear state, the nuclear threat to Ireland comes from a nuclear accident abroad, but the risk is very unlikely as recognised in Ireland's national risk assessments. This exercise was the first one conducted to test the new National Plan for Nuclear and Radiological Emergency Exposures which was published in 2019. It was organised by the EPA in line with its role under legislation.

Veronica outlined the purpose of the exercise which was to practise implementing the structures and arrangements outlined in the new National Plan in order to confirm aspects of implementation and to identify any gaps in the plan or in the arrangements in place within participating organisations. Veronica advised that communications during emergencies emerged as the key learning from the exercise. Work is ongoing on addressing the learnings from the exercise. The Department has indicated that the national plan will be updated to take account of the learnings from the exercise.

Veronica informed the Committee that Ireland will participate in the NEA INEX-6 exercise planned for 2024 which is focused on the recovery phase and includes modules on food safety and health impacts.

A member of the Committee stressed the importance of good communications and asked if there was any information publicly available on protection actions that could be taken by the public to reduce their exposure in a nuclear emergency.

There was also a question from the floor regarding the role of hospitals and was that covered in the exercise. Veronica confirmed that it was not covered as the exercise focused on the very early stages of an emergency. It was clarified that it is the Department of Health and not the EPA that is responsible for public health messages. One member stressed the importance of following the plan during an emergency.

#### **4. Exploring radon dose coefficients for regulatory purposes in Ireland**

David Fenton presented to the Committee on the choice of radon dose coefficient for Ireland and gave a summary of the requirement of domestic regulations that implement the Basic Safety Standard Directive and article 66 of the Directive relating to radon in workplaces. He outlined the importance of choosing an appropriate dose coefficient as it is key to informing a proportionate level of surveillance/enforcement of occupational radon exposure. The choice of the dose coefficient will inform the number of hours an employee can work in certain workplaces and the categorisation of workers. David outlined what other countries are doing in this regard and explained that the EPA is considering applying the ICRP 137 dose coefficients in tourist caves. EPA is also considering applying the UNSCEAR dose coefficient in its next national dose report as the purpose of the UNSCEAR coefficient is to support comparisons between doses from various exposures.

The Committee recognised the lack of consensus amongst countries as to the appropriate dose coefficient to apply to certain occupational exposures and the complexity in communicating the application of such factors.

#### **5. Proposed methodology of the management of radioactive material below exemption levels**

Noeleen Cunningham presented on the proposed revised regulatory approach for management of radioactive material below exemption levels. Noeleen gave a summary of the proposed revised regulatory approach:

A revised approach to the management of radioactive sources below IRR19 exemption levels is being proposed:

- For disused sources that have fallen below IRR19 exemption/clearance levels and where takeback agreements and recycling/reuse routes cannot be utilised.
  - Proposed to implement the clearance provision as set out in Regulation 19 (2) of IRR19 to clear such material from regulatory control prior to their final disposal.

It is intended that implementation of the clearance provision will be carried out on a case-by-case basis. The proposal will be submitted to the EPA Board for approval. Subject to approval, a guidance note will be prepared to implement the approach. The Committee was supportive of the revised approach.

## **6. Summary and Close**

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked the Committee for attending the in-person meeting.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

Proposed dates for the next meeting will be circulated.