

Public Awareness and Involvement in the Licensing Process for Safe and Secure use of Nuclear Energy



Faizan Mansoor

**International Seminar on Nuclear Safety and Security Challenges of the
21st Century**

(Islamabad, 21 – 23 April, 2011)



Contents

- **Public Awareness**
 - Role of nuclear regulatory authority
 - Public awareness – why?
 - Problems in establishing public awareness program
 - Challenges in implementation of public awareness program
 - Information for sharing with public
 - PNRA efforts for public awareness
- **Public involvement in licensing process**
 - Generic Approach
 - USNRC Approach
 - ASN Approach
 - PNRA Approach



Public Awareness



Role of Nuclear Regulatory Authority

- Works on behalf of the government for ensuring public safety
- Not biased for promoting nuclear industry
- Contact point for principal stakeholders (public, government, media and international organizations, etc.) in case of abnormal situation – Fukushima accident
- Provides independent (from the industry), neutral, balanced and factual information to the public about any issue related to nuclear safety in the country and worldwide



Role of Nuclear Regulatory Authority

- Inform public about regulatory efforts for ensuring nuclear safety
- Establish trust and understanding with its principal stakeholders (public, government, media, international community) by communicating
 - openly and honestly
 - regularly (not only during crisis) and consistently (about safety and regulatory matters)



Public Awareness – Why?

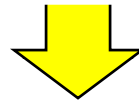
- Public is principal stakeholder
- Public should know and understand the
 - risks
 - benefits
- Public has right to access the information that has any impact on their lives, health and environment
- Public should be free to make their independent opinion based on available information



Problems in Establishing Public Awareness Program

Main focus of regulators – core functions, manpower development, organizational development

Result



- i. Only reactive communication (responses to questions raised, information on accidents)
- ii. Less Priority

Regulators have a fair level of technical expertise but not generally trained on public communication skill

Use of technical language – difficult for the public to understand

Adequate financial resources not allocated on public communication program



Challenges in implementing Public Awareness Program

- In countries like Pakistan, public has more confidence on non-governmental sources of information (e.g., media)
- Public is attracted more by entertainment programs as compared to educational programs
- Reading habit is not common in our society
- Nuclear is a difficult subject – radiation not visible

Should then we not start a Public Awareness Program???



PNRA Efforts for Public Awareness

- Public awareness program started with media campaign during early days of PNRA that faces following challenges
 - **Limitation of resources**
 - **Difficulties in preparation of information that public could understand**
 - **Information created some confusion**

Result – Campaign Discontinued



PNRA Efforts for Public Awareness

- Launching of the website www.pnra.org for public information
 - Test run started in 2003
 - Website launched formally in 2004
 - Provides information such as:
 - PNRA functions
 - Legislation and regulations
 - PNRA annual report
 - National report on Nuclear Safety Convention
 - International safety assessment report – IRRT report
 - Useful links
 - Press releases





PNRA Efforts for Public Awareness

- **Public awareness campaign restarted after some more thoughts for target audiences:**
 - Lectures to selected groups
 - educational institutions
 - workers involved in the use of radioactive sources and materials
 - Preparation and distribution of brochures containing information on radiation protection
 - Issuance of supplement on leading newspapers at the 10th anniversary of PNRA as a starting point
 - Preparation of media policy in consultation with the Government



Public Involvement In Licensing Process



Generic Approach

- **Involvement of public on Government decision making process for construction of NPPs – referendum**
- **Access of public to licensing submissions – safety analysis reports, etc.**
- **Public hearing for issuance of authorization and licences**
- **Use of website for providing necessary information to public and obtaining feedback on:**
 - Rules, regulations, codes, guides
 - Regulatory processes
 - Regulatory decisions
 - Event reports
 - Enforcement actions
- **Holding routine meetings with public or public representatives**
- **Publishing newsletters**
- **Issuing press releases**



USNRC Approach

- **Highly informative website**
 - Complete information on regulatory bases and activities
 - Information on status, events and major issues of NPPs
- **Public hearing system for major regulatory decisions**
- **Making licensing submissions available to the public at the office**
- **Routine media briefing**
- **News releases**

Highly appreciated by the public and international community



ASN Approach

- **Sharing all information related to regulatory activities, reporting, nuclear safety and radiation protection with the public**
- **Invite public discussion and debates on topics of concern of ASN – one of the six priorities of ASN strategy**
- **Formal public hearing during licensing process**
- **News releases**
- **Communication with media**
- **Information sharing with European Union**



PNRA Approach

- PNRA has taken certain initiatives as initial steps towards involvement of public in regulatory decision making process
- Information sharing through internet
- Seeking public comments on draft regulations by posting on the website
- Established communication links with media – spokesperson nominated
- Quarterly summary report to the Government (public representative) on the safety status of NPPs
- Initial discussion started for public involvement in regulatory decision making process

Detailed strategy and processes for public involvement are to be developed in future