

An Open Business by Dana Sacchetti

Report from OSART Mission of France's Cruas Nuclear Power Plant.

It's a bitterly cold December day in Cruas, a small village situated along the Rhône River in southern France.

Today is a big day for the town, and there's a noticeable business in the town's centre. A couple hundred people quickly make their way through the rain and enter a large assembly room in Cruas' town hall. Those assembled, including workers from the nearby Cruas Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), journalists, town officials, and staff from the French nuclear industry and regulatory body, sit in hushed silence as a unique meeting begins.

A group of 10 nuclear safety experts, from countries as far flung as Japan, South Africa, and Hungary, take the stage to make remarks on the operational safety performance of the Cruas plant, a large 4-reactor facility that accounts for nearly 5% of France's electricity production. One by one, each expert addresses the audience, giving his or her assessment on what the plant does well, what can be improved, and other constructive feedback that can advance plant safety. The comments and feedback by the OSART team for the Cruas plant are balanced in their positive feedback and recommendations for improvement. As each expert provides commentary, murmurs and chatter can be heard among the plant workers.


It's a unique thing; inviting a team of strangers to your workplace to study your every move for three weeks, and then to have them speak about your plant and its performance in such a public forum.

Welcome to a typical OSART exit meeting, where a hand-picked team of nuclear safety experts summarize their assessment of the operational safety of



an NPP. The transparency and openness with which the meeting progresses is surprising to many who are new to the process, but it bodes well for maintaining a high level of safety within France's nuclear industry.

Very few industries open their doors to such scrutiny, analysis, and public discussion of performance, but then again, nuclear power isn't any ordinary industry. The meeting progresses and concludes with a press conference, where journalists ask pointed questions directly to OSART team leaders and Cruas plant management.

Maintaining the highest levels of nuclear safety is a complex task, a collective responsibility. With missions such as OSART providing transparent, constructive feedback, the effort continues. 

In 2009, OSART experts reviewed the operational safety performance of the Cruas plant, a large 4-reactor facility that accounts for nearly 5% of France's electricity production.

(Photo: EDF)