

# How the United Kingdom seeks to enhance nuclear security with the help of IPPAS

By May Fawaz-Huber



Participants attend opening of IPPAS follow-up mission at the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) headquarters in Bootle, UK, February 2016.

(Photo: Office for Nuclear Regulation)

In October 2011, an IAEA team of international nuclear security experts conducted an International Physical Protection Service mission (IPPAS) to the United Kingdom. They visited the Sellafield civil nuclear site, as well as Barrow Port, which is used for the transport of nuclear material. The IAEA conducted a follow-up mission in February 2016.

IPPAS missions provide advice on how to improve the effectiveness of a State's physical protection regime, either nationally or at facility level. They do so by comparing it with relevant international legal instruments, guidelines and best practices, particularly the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the IAEA Nuclear Security Series guidance publications.

"The missions have been valuable in allowing the UK to draw upon the expertise of the IAEA and other Member States in a range of disciplines across nuclear security," said Robin Grimes, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. "They have identified areas of good security practice that the UK can share with others."

The 2011 mission team included experts from seven IAEA Member States — Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden and the United States of America — as well as from the IAEA Secretariat. They had extensive experience in various areas of nuclear security, including legislative and regulatory practices, physical protection, transport security, security culture, policing and contingency planning. They performed a national level review of the legal and regulatory framework, as well as a review of the security measures and procedures in place to execute this framework at facilities and during transport.

"The mission underlined the importance of nuclear security, including security culture, for the nuclear industry and promoted discussion of this issue within the industry," Grimes said, adding that IPPAS missions were "one of a number of ways in which the British Government demonstrated to the public its commitment to nuclear security."

The follow-up mission reviewed the actions taken in response to the 2011 mission's recommendations and provided further advice.



“The follow-up mission also aimed at evaluating the current status of the UK’s physical protection regime of nuclear material and nuclear facilities, as well as its implementation at Heysham nuclear power station,” said Arvydas Stadalnikas, Senior Nuclear Security Officer at the IAEA. The mission sought to provide further advice to enhance the UK’s nuclear security regime, as well as identify good practices that could be beneficial to other Member States, he added.

The follow-up mission team included experts from Canada, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the USA and the IAEA.

“The UK was very happy to welcome two IPPAS missions because of the commitments regarding the confidentiality of sensitive information made by those taking part in these missions,” Grimes said. He added that the UK does have in place a robust and effective security regime for its civil nuclear industry; however, it seeks to achieve continuous improvement in this regime. “We strongly encourage other States to consider inviting an IPPAS mission,” he said.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the service. Since the first mission in 1996, IPPAS has been helping Member States identify ways to strengthen the protection of their nuclear materials and facilities against

unauthorized removal and sabotage. During this period, the IAEA has conducted 75 IPPAS missions in 47 countries and at the IAEA laboratories in Seibersdorf, with the participation of more than 140 experts from around the world.

States that have recently hosted IPPAS missions include Albania, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates. Several others, including Australia, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Hungary, Jamaica, Lithuania, Madagascar and Turkey have requested IPPAS missions for 2017.

“The significant increase in the number of requests for IPPAS missions demonstrates that this independent international advisory service is being recognized for its value in the exchange of views and advice on nuclear security,” Stadalnikas said. “IPPAS’ 20-year anniversary marks significant achievements, which are an incentive for the IAEA to continuously enhance this service to make it more beneficial to Member States.”

The IAEA has established a database of good practices identified during IPPAS missions and made available with consent from host countries. It is accessible to Member States through the IAEA Nuclear Security Information Portal.

**The Sellafield nuclear site, which was visited by the IPPAS team during their mission in October 2011 and during the follow-up mission in February 2016.**

(Photo: Sellafield LTD)