

A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE TO NUCLEAR SECURITY EVENTS –CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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1. SUMMARY

Nuclear Security Events (NSEs) represent serious risks to the public and responding services alike and are extremely complex situations to resolve. It is essential therefore that States have a clear framework to deal with all aspects of those risks and that supporting plans facilitate the effective joint-working of multiple-agencies. The IAEA will publish formal guidance on this issue shortly. This paper is intended to share experiences gained so far during the development of that guidance in designing, delivering and sustaining capabilities required to provide an effective multi-agency response to NSE's.

1. CHALLENGES Several workshops at national, regional and international level have been delivered to Member States (MS) during the development of the National Framework guidance. Without exception, those MS which have received the workshops have commented positively on the added value provided by having a well-structured and clearly defined national framework for dealing with NSEs. A number of challenges have been identified by MS during the workshops and some options for facing up to those challenges considered.
 - Joint planning: responding services are very capable of developing plans to deploy their own response capabilities to the scene of an NSE. However, there is often a reluctance to participate in joint agency planning sessions as this implies a loss of control. The workshops were able to convince delegates of the vital importance of joint planning and the development of multi-agency concepts of operation which are necessary to deliver a joint plan.

- Ownership of the planning process and the response: unless the organisational hierarchy is clearly identified and formally agreed by all stakeholders, it is likely that levels of commitment from stakeholders will be sub-optimal or, even worse, the command and control arrangements lose clarity and become confused.

- Capability development: a particular challenge has been an undue focus on the procurement of detection equipment without an associated deployment strategy, a clear understanding of the limitations of the equipment, or trained and equipped personnel who can interpret the output of the equipment and take appropriate action without delay.

- Sustainability: it is inevitable that threat levels will vary over time and it is, of course, hugely expensive to develop a capability which can respond to a high threat environment. However, MS can be tempted to make economies in sustaining the level of the response as soon as the threat level appears to diminish. If this is done without agreeing a sensible baseline capability which can be easily maintained and quickly upgraded, and without a knowledge management strategy which prevents expertise from being drained away and not replaced, MS can easily find themselves unprepared to meet emerging threats. This often leads to constant re-learning of the same lessons by organisations, with a vicious circle of capital investment followed by premature scrapping of equipment and a further round of expenditure when the response falters during the next incident.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

Some potential solutions have been identified during the workshops which expand on the formal guidance. There are some non-complex opportunities for improving the quality of the response to NSEs

- Joint planning and exercising develops relationships which will be of critical importance during an NSE. The level of trust generated between individuals during joint activities cannot be over-stated. True interoperability comes when the responding agencies understand not only their role but also the roles of the other agencies working alongside them.

A graded approach to the management of risks, when adopted by the responding agencies, facilitates a shared understanding of the problem, a joint evaluation of the hazards and a shared approach to their management.

- The National Framework guidance rationalizes the key activities and outcomes necessary for a response to be effective. These can then become part of a joint concept of operations linked to a set of strategic priorities. In that way there is a clear "line of sight" from strategic command through to the front-line response operation.

- The benefits of the collaboration on planning for, and dealing with, NSEs can flow into the planning process for the response to other types of security event, not only those involving the potential or actual release of

radiation.

- Lessons from joint training and exercising - 'red-teaming' for example - can be fed back to protective security planners and assist in identifying the vulnerabilities which led to material becoming out of regulatory control in the first place.

1. CONCLUSION The value of a National Framework for response to NSEs is clear –addressing the complexities of planning and responding to NSEs jointly with partner agencies brings benefits which reach beyond nuclear security.

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