

International Conference on the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM) in Industry



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Considerations in developing policies and strategies for the management of NORM

During the past several decades, exposure to naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM) has emerged as one of the outstanding topics in radiation protection. This trend crystallized in the new IAEA (2014) and EU (2013) Basic Safety Standards, both of which established requirements for the regulatory control of NORM processing industries.

Two main practical challenges are specific to the control of NORM vs. other sources of radiation exposure: (i) developing a holistic framework for chemical and radiation risks, and (ii) applying a graded-approach to a wide diversity of industrial sectors, with a broad variability in radiation risk among facilities, even within the same sector.

In addition to the control of NORM industries, the two following interconnected areas need to be tackled:

- The management of NORM residues, encouraging safe circular economy solutions for reuse or recycling, and ensuring that adequate waste disposal infrastructures are available in the country for residues not viable for further use
- The identification, sustainable management and/or remediation of NORM legacy sites

While regulation remains an essential element for the control of exposures to NORM, such a complex setting requires developing national policies and strategies for successful outcomes. On the one hand, a clearly formulated policy contributes to raise society awareness and support. On the other hand, common policy goals ensure that the different actors involved (including the various regulatory authorities) will take coordinated action to deliver that policy.

Every country faces a unique set of issues and has different governance and socio-economic circumstances, but there is a great deal to learn from international practice. Sharing this experience is one of the objectives of the ENVIRONET NORM project, developed under Task Group 1.

This presentation gives an overview of the Spanish experience. It suggests that a purely hierarchical, top-down regulatory approach will not achieve effective implementation, and that a shift needs to be made to policies and strategies where regulators play a role as an enabler of a multi-actor transformation process.

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