

Achievement of an international emergency exercise involving a transport of radioactive material

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Transports of radioactive materials are regularly performed in an international context and accidents with cross-border consequences cannot be avoided. Therefore, there is a need to harmonize emergency response or at least to have a clear understanding of other countries emergency plans. To that end, it was proposed to include a study dedicated to this topic in the European project PREPARE (Innovative integrative tools and Platforms to be prepared for Radiological Emergencies and Post-Accident Response in Europe) including various objectives relative to the off-site nuclear emergency response and preparedness in European countries notably in case of transport accident.

The first step of this project was to clearly describe the national and local emergency organisation and preparedness in the European countries participating to the project (France, United Kingdom and Belgium) especially in case of accident involving a transport of radioactive material. The description of local requirements was obtained using a specific questionnaire in order to have the same level of information in each country.

The second step of this project was to test, in case of an accident scenario involving an international transport of radioactive material, the emergency plans applied and the communications between two neighboring countries (France and Belgium). A table top exercise was organized to evaluate the accident management process including, on the one hand all phases relative to alerts, reflex actions, information exchange and concerted assessment, on the other hand public information and solution to bring back the transport in a safe status. The accident and all the emergency response teams of each organization were located in adjacent meeting rooms in order to provide the necessary information to the participants and to monitor the flow of information. This exercise, the first involving an international transport of radioactive materials, took place in the Emergency Technical Centre of IRSN (Institut de Radioprotection et de Sécurité Nucléaire) located in Fontenay-aux-Roses in France. More than 30 people were involved including representatives of the Belgian competent authority (Federal Agency for Nuclear Control –FANC), the French Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) as well as their Technical Safety Operators (TSO), respectively BEL V and IRSN, and the major French operator AREVA TN International. This exercise mainly highlighted communication between competent authorities and the necessary coordination of local intervention teams. Lessons learned from this experience allowed participants to create a feedback and to improve concerted European emergency management in case of accident involving an international transport of radioactive material.

Country or International Organisation

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