

IAEA Safety Standards

for protecting people and the environment

Communication and Consultation with Interested Parties by the Regulatory Body

General Safety Guide

No. GSG-6



IAEA

International Atomic Energy Agency

IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS AND RELATED PUBLICATIONS

IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS

Under the terms of Article III of its Statute, the IAEA is authorized to establish or adopt standards of safety for protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property, and to provide for the application of these standards.

The publications by means of which the IAEA establishes standards are issued in the **IAEA Safety Standards Series**. This series covers nuclear safety, radiation safety, transport safety and waste safety. The publication categories in the series are **Safety Fundamentals**, **Safety Requirements** and **Safety Guides**.

Information on the IAEA's safety standards programme is available on the IAEA Internet site

<http://www-ns.iaea.org/standards/>

The site provides the texts in English of published and draft safety standards. The texts of safety standards issued in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish, the IAEA Safety Glossary and a status report for safety standards under development are also available. For further information, please contact the IAEA at: Vienna International Centre, PO Box 100, 1400 Vienna, Austria.

All users of IAEA safety standards are invited to inform the IAEA of experience in their use (e.g. as a basis for national regulations, for safety reviews and for training courses) for the purpose of ensuring that they continue to meet users' needs. Information may be provided via the IAEA Internet site or by post, as above, or by email to Official.Mail@iaea.org.

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The IAEA provides for the application of the standards and, under the terms of Articles III and VIII.C of its Statute, makes available and fosters the exchange of information relating to peaceful nuclear activities and serves as an intermediary among its Member States for this purpose.

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The **IAEA Nuclear Energy Series** comprises informational publications to encourage and assist research on, and the development and practical application of, nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It includes reports and guides on the status of and advances in technology, and on experience, good practices and practical examples in the areas of nuclear power, the nuclear fuel cycle, radioactive waste management and decommissioning.

COMMUNICATION AND
CONSULTATION WITH
INTERESTED PARTIES BY
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The Agency's Statute was approved on 23 October 1956 by the Conference on the Statute of the IAEA held at United Nations Headquarters, New York; it entered into force on 29 July 1957. The Headquarters of the Agency are situated in Vienna. Its principal objective is "to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world".

IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS SERIES No. GSG-6

COMMUNICATION AND
CONSULTATION WITH
INTERESTED PARTIES BY
THE REGULATORY BODY

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDE

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY
VIENNA, 2017

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Marketing and Sales Unit, Publishing Section
International Atomic Energy Agency
Vienna International Centre
PO Box 100
1400 Vienna, Austria
fax: +43 1 2600 29302
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FOREWORD

by Yukiya Amano
Director General

The IAEA's Statute authorizes the Agency to "establish or adopt... standards of safety for protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property" — standards that the IAEA must use in its own operations, and which States can apply by means of their regulatory provisions for nuclear and radiation safety. The IAEA does this in consultation with the competent organs of the United Nations and with the specialized agencies concerned. A comprehensive set of high quality standards under regular review is a key element of a stable and sustainable global safety regime, as is the IAEA's assistance in their application.

The IAEA commenced its safety standards programme in 1958. The emphasis placed on quality, fitness for purpose and continuous improvement has led to the widespread use of the IAEA standards throughout the world. The Safety Standards Series now includes unified Fundamental Safety Principles, which represent an international consensus on what must constitute a high level of protection and safety. With the strong support of the Commission on Safety Standards, the IAEA is working to promote the global acceptance and use of its standards.

Standards are only effective if they are properly applied in practice. The IAEA's safety services encompass design, siting and engineering safety, operational safety, radiation safety, safe transport of radioactive material and safe management of radioactive waste, as well as governmental organization, regulatory matters and safety culture in organizations. These safety services assist Member States in the application of the standards and enable valuable experience and insights to be shared.

Regulating safety is a national responsibility, and many States have decided to adopt the IAEA's standards for use in their national regulations. For parties to the various international safety conventions, IAEA standards provide a consistent, reliable means of ensuring the effective fulfilment of obligations under the conventions. The standards are also applied by regulatory bodies and operators around the world to enhance safety in nuclear power generation and in nuclear applications in medicine, industry, agriculture and research.

Safety is not an end in itself but a prerequisite for the purpose of the protection of people in all States and of the environment — now and in the future. The risks associated with ionizing radiation must be assessed and controlled without unduly limiting the contribution of nuclear energy to equitable and sustainable development. Governments, regulatory bodies and operators everywhere must ensure that nuclear material and radiation sources are used beneficially, safely and ethically. The IAEA safety standards are designed to facilitate this, and I encourage all Member States to make use of them.

THE IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS

BACKGROUND

Radioactivity is a natural phenomenon and natural sources of radiation are features of the environment. Radiation and radioactive substances have many beneficial applications, ranging from power generation to uses in medicine, industry and agriculture. The radiation risks to workers and the public and to the environment that may arise from these applications have to be assessed and, if necessary, controlled.

Activities such as the medical uses of radiation, the operation of nuclear installations, the production, transport and use of radioactive material, and the management of radioactive waste must therefore be subject to standards of safety.

Regulating safety is a national responsibility. However, radiation risks may transcend national borders, and international cooperation serves to promote and enhance safety globally by exchanging experience and by improving capabilities to control hazards, to prevent accidents, to respond to emergencies and to mitigate any harmful consequences.

States have an obligation of diligence and duty of care, and are expected to fulfil their national and international undertakings and obligations.

International safety standards provide support for States in meeting their obligations under general principles of international law, such as those relating to environmental protection. International safety standards also promote and assure confidence in safety and facilitate international commerce and trade.

A global nuclear safety regime is in place and is being continuously improved. IAEA safety standards, which support the implementation of binding international instruments and national safety infrastructures, are a cornerstone of this global regime. The IAEA safety standards constitute a useful tool for contracting parties to assess their performance under these international conventions.

THE IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS

The status of the IAEA safety standards derives from the IAEA's Statute, which authorizes the IAEA to establish or adopt, in consultation and, where appropriate, in collaboration with the competent organs of the United Nations and with the specialized agencies concerned, standards of safety for protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property, and to provide for their application.

With a view to ensuring the protection of people and the environment from harmful effects of ionizing radiation, the IAEA safety standards establish fundamental safety principles, requirements and measures to control the radiation exposure of people and the release of radioactive material to the environment, to restrict the likelihood of events that might lead to a loss of control over a nuclear reactor core, nuclear chain reaction, radioactive source or any other source of radiation, and to mitigate the consequences of such events if they were to occur. The standards apply to facilities and activities that give rise to radiation risks, including nuclear installations, the use of radiation and radioactive sources, the transport of radioactive material and the management of radioactive waste.

Safety measures and security measures¹ have in common the aim of protecting human life and health and the environment. Safety measures and security measures must be designed and implemented in an integrated manner so that security measures do not compromise safety and safety measures do not compromise security.

The IAEA safety standards reflect an international consensus on what constitutes a high level of safety for protecting people and the environment from harmful effects of ionizing radiation. They are issued in the IAEA Safety Standards Series, which has three categories (see Fig. 1).

Safety Fundamentals

Safety Fundamentals present the fundamental safety objective and principles of protection and safety, and provide the basis for the safety requirements.

Safety Requirements

An integrated and consistent set of Safety Requirements establishes the requirements that must be met to ensure the protection of people and the environment, both now and in the future. The requirements are governed by the objective and principles of the Safety Fundamentals. If the requirements are not met, measures must be taken to reach or restore the required level of safety. The format and style of the requirements facilitate their use for the establishment, in a harmonized manner, of a national regulatory framework. Requirements, including numbered ‘overarching’ requirements, are expressed as ‘shall’ statements. Many requirements are not addressed to a specific party, the implication being that the appropriate parties are responsible for fulfilling them.

¹ See also publications issued in the IAEA Nuclear Security Series.

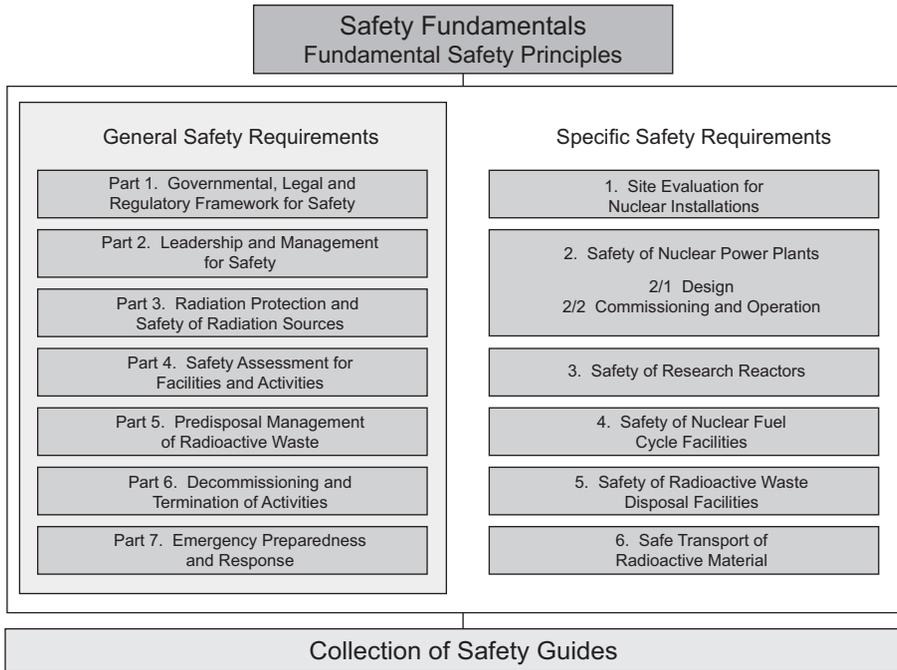


FIG. 1. The long term structure of the IAEA Safety Standards Series.

Safety Guides

Safety Guides provide recommendations and guidance on how to comply with the safety requirements, indicating an international consensus that it is necessary to take the measures recommended (or equivalent alternative measures). The Safety Guides present international good practices, and increasingly they reflect best practices, to help users striving to achieve high levels of safety. The recommendations provided in Safety Guides are expressed as ‘should’ statements.

APPLICATION OF THE IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS

The principal users of safety standards in IAEA Member States are regulatory bodies and other relevant national authorities. The IAEA safety standards are also used by co-sponsoring organizations and by many organizations that design, construct and operate nuclear facilities, as well as organizations involved in the use of radiation and radioactive sources.

The IAEA safety standards are applicable, as relevant, throughout the entire lifetime of all facilities and activities — existing and new — utilized for peaceful purposes and to protective actions to reduce existing radiation risks. They can be used by States as a reference for their national regulations in respect of facilities and activities.

The IAEA's Statute makes the safety standards binding on the IAEA in relation to its own operations and also on States in relation to IAEA assisted operations.

The IAEA safety standards also form the basis for the IAEA's safety review services, and they are used by the IAEA in support of competence building, including the development of educational curricula and training courses.

International conventions contain requirements similar to those in the IAEA safety standards and make them binding on contracting parties. The IAEA safety standards, supplemented by international conventions, industry standards and detailed national requirements, establish a consistent basis for protecting people and the environment. There will also be some special aspects of safety that need to be assessed at the national level. For example, many of the IAEA safety standards, in particular those addressing aspects of safety in planning or design, are intended to apply primarily to new facilities and activities. The requirements established in the IAEA safety standards might not be fully met at some existing facilities that were built to earlier standards. The way in which IAEA safety standards are to be applied to such facilities is a decision for individual States.

The scientific considerations underlying the IAEA safety standards provide an objective basis for decisions concerning safety; however, decision makers must also make informed judgements and must determine how best to balance the benefits of an action or an activity against the associated radiation risks and any other detrimental impacts to which it gives rise.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR THE IAEA SAFETY STANDARDS

The preparation and review of the safety standards involves the IAEA Secretariat and five safety standards committees, for emergency preparedness and response (EPReSC) (as of 2016), nuclear safety (NUSSC), radiation safety (RASSC), the safety of radioactive waste (WASSC) and the safe transport of radioactive material (TRANSSC), and a Commission on Safety Standards (CSS) which oversees the IAEA safety standards programme (see Fig. 2).

All IAEA Member States may nominate experts for the safety standards committees and may provide comments on draft standards. The membership of

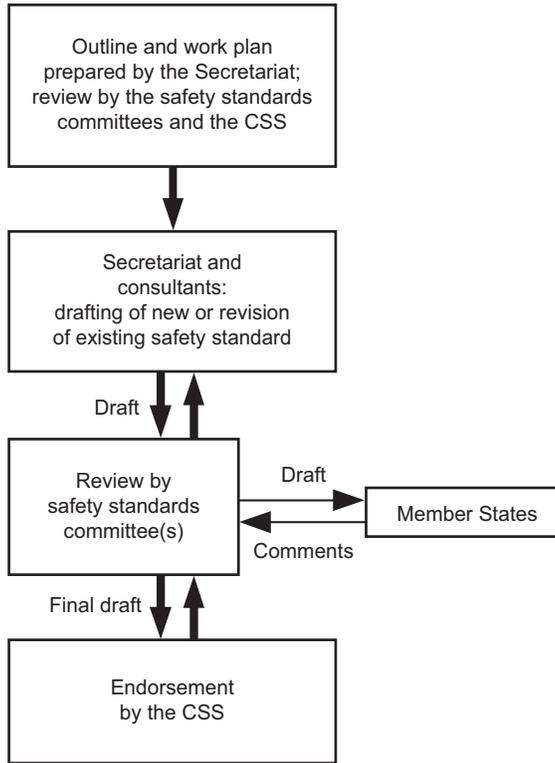


FIG. 2. The process for developing a new safety standard or revising an existing standard.

the Commission on Safety Standards is appointed by the Director General and includes senior governmental officials having responsibility for establishing national standards.

A management system has been established for the processes of planning, developing, reviewing, revising and establishing the IAEA safety standards. It articulates the mandate of the IAEA, the vision for the future application of the safety standards, policies and strategies, and corresponding functions and responsibilities.

INTERACTION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The findings of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) and the recommendations of international

expert bodies, notably the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), are taken into account in developing the IAEA safety standards. Some safety standards are developed in cooperation with other bodies in the United Nations system or other specialized agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization, the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization.

INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT

Safety related terms are to be understood as defined in the IAEA Safety Glossary (see <http://www-ns.iaea.org/standards/safety-glossary.htm>). Otherwise, words are used with the spellings and meanings assigned to them in the latest edition of The Concise Oxford Dictionary. For Safety Guides, the English version of the text is the authoritative version.

The background and context of each standard in the IAEA Safety Standards Series and its objective, scope and structure are explained in Section 1, Introduction, of each publication.

Material for which there is no appropriate place in the body text (e.g. material that is subsidiary to or separate from the body text, is included in support of statements in the body text, or describes methods of calculation, procedures or limits and conditions) may be presented in appendices or annexes.

An appendix, if included, is considered to form an integral part of the safety standard. Material in an appendix has the same status as the body text, and the IAEA assumes authorship of it. Annexes and footnotes to the main text, if included, are used to provide practical examples or additional information or explanation. Annexes and footnotes are not integral parts of the main text. Annex material published by the IAEA is not necessarily issued under its authorship; material under other authorship may be presented in annexes to the safety standards. Extraneous material presented in annexes is excerpted and adapted as necessary to be generally useful.

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1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1. Over the past few decades, there has been a growing societal awareness of the need for transparency and openness, and the participation of interested parties, in matters relating to nuclear and radiation safety. Members of the public usually have incomplete knowledge and a great deal of uncertainty regarding any issue involving nuclear and radiation safety because of the complexity of the topic. Such incomplete knowledge and uncertainty influence the public's perception of the radiation risk associated with nuclear energy, radioactive waste and the use of radiation sources. The public rightly expects to have access to reliable, comprehensive and easily understandable (plain, unambiguous and jargon-free) information about safety and regulatory issues in order to form opinions and make fully informed decisions. The public also expects to have fair and reasonable opportunities to provide their views and to influence regulatory decision making processes.

1.2. Communication and consultation are strategic instruments that support the regulatory body in performing its regulatory functions. They enable the regulatory body to make informed decisions and to develop awareness of safety among interested parties, thereby promoting safety culture. The establishment of regular communication and consultation with interested parties will contribute to more effective communication by the regulatory body in a possible nuclear or radiological emergency.

1.3. Principle 2 of IAEA Safety Standards Series No. SF-1, Fundamental Safety Principles [1], states in para. 3.10 that, among other aspects:

“The regulatory body must: ...

- Set up appropriate means of informing parties in the vicinity, the public and other interested parties, and the information media about the safety aspects (including health and environmental aspects) of facilities and activities and about regulatory processes;
- Consult parties in the vicinity, the public and other interested parties, as appropriate, in an open and inclusive process.”

1.4. In addition, communication and consultation are subject to the safety requirements established in IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 1 (Rev. 1), Governmental, Legal and Regulatory Framework for Safety [2], in particular:

“Requirement 36: Communication and consultation with interested parties

The regulatory body shall promote the establishment of appropriate means of informing and consulting interested parties and the public about the possible radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, and about the processes and decisions of the regulatory body.”

1.5. Under Requirement 3 of IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 3, Radiation Protection and Safety of Radiation Sources: International Basic Safety Standards [3], the regulatory body is required to establish a regulatory system for protection and safety that includes provision of information to, and consultation with, parties affected by its decisions and, as appropriate, the public and other interested parties.

1.6. The role of the results of the safety assessment in communication and consultation with interested parties is indicated under Requirements 22–24 of IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 4 (Rev. 1), Safety Assessment for Facilities and Activities [4]. A regulatory requirement on those responsible for performing the safety assessment is established in para. 5.9 of GSR Part 4 (Rev. 1) [4]:

“Consideration shall also be given to ways in which results and insights from the safety assessment may best be communicated to a wide range of interested parties, including the designers, the operating organization, the regulatory body and other professionals. Communication of the results from the safety assessment to interested parties shall be commensurate with the possible radiation risks arising from the facility or activity and the complexity of the models and tools used.”

1.7. In relation to the management of radioactive waste, IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 5, Predisposal Management of Radioactive Waste [5], also establishes requirements for communication and consultation. Paragraph 3.4 of GSR Part 5 [5] requires that the government consider:

“Defining and putting in place the overall process for the development, operation and closure or decommissioning of facilities, including the legal requirements at each step, the decision making process and the process for the involvement of interested parties”.

It is also stated in para. 3.8 of GSR Part 5 [5] that the regulatory body has to “Encourage dialogue between and participate in dialogues with the operator and other interested parties”. The need to provide comprehensive and understandable information to the interested parties for whom the documents are intended underpins Requirement 15 of GSR Part 5 [5] on “Documentation of the safety case and supporting safety assessment”. IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSG-3, The Safety Case and Safety Assessment for the Predisposal Management of Radioactive Waste [6], states in para. 1.2 that “The safety case will also be the main basis on which dialogue with interested parties will be conducted and on which confidence in the safety of the facility or activity will be developed.”

1.8. In relation to decommissioning, IAEA Safety Standards Series No. GSR Part 6, Decommissioning of Facilities [7], states in para. 3.3 that:

“The responsibilities of the regulatory body shall include... [p]roviding interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the final decommissioning plan and supporting documents before their approval, on the basis of national regulations”.

1.9. In relation to the disposal of radioactive waste, IAEA Safety Standards Series No. SSR-5, Disposal of Radioactive Waste [8], states in para. 3.9 that “The regulatory body has to engage in dialogue with waste producers, the operators of the disposal facility and interested parties to ensure that the regulatory requirements are appropriate and practicable.”

IAEA Safety Standards Series No. SSG-23, The Safety Case and Safety Assessment for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste [9], states in para. 1.3 that “The safety case will also be the main basis on which dialogue with interested parties will be conducted and on which confidence in the safety of the disposal facility will be developed.”

1.10. The involvement of interested parties is a mandatory component of various international conventions and treaties that detail the role of governments. This includes, but is not limited to, conventions and treaties covering nuclear

facilities. Development of a national policy for nuclear and radiation safety, such as the introduction of a nuclear power programme, is subject to environmental restrictions, and specific facilities and activities may be subject to environmental impact assessment.

1.11. The legitimate concerns of interested parties regarding nuclear and radiation safety matters are best addressed through a culture of transparency and openness, and a strategy to involve, when appropriate, interested parties in decision making. Supporting rationales for such an approach include the following:

- Accountability: Transparency and openness promote accountability of the regulatory body, which is a key contributor to safety culture, as stated in Requirement 5 of GSR Part 3 [3]. Furthermore, accountability increases the confidence of interested parties that their views will be properly taken into account by the regulatory body and enhances their confidence in the regulatory body itself.
- Credibility and legitimacy: Transparent and open communication about regulatory decision making and the provision of opportunities for the involvement of interested parties reinforce an awareness of the role and responsibilities of the regulatory body. They also contribute to informing interested parties about how the regulatory body is discharging its duties and seeking to maintain and continuously improve safety. The use of a transparent and open regulatory decision making process helps to demonstrate and reinforce the distinction between the regulatory body, the proponents of nuclear and radiation activities, and those organizations concerned with public acceptance of nuclear energy.
- Quality in the performance of regulatory functions: The active involvement of interested parties allows individuals and societal groups to participate in the regulatory decision making process and to influence or even challenge the regulatory body and the information it uses to perform its regulatory functions. The knowledge of interested parties (e.g. the local residents' knowledge of the local environment; different social factors, values and meanings) can inform how issues are framed. This will allow the regulatory body to better understand — and, therefore better consider — the concerns of interested parties as it performs its regulatory functions.
- Independence: A high level of transparency and openness allows the regulatory body to demonstrate its ability to make independent judgements and decisions, and contributes to ensuring its freedom from undue influences that might adversely affect safety.

1.12. Decision making mechanisms differ considerably from State to State, depending on the State's culture, history and form of government, and on the legal framework in the State. Therefore, for the establishment of processes for communication and consultation, factors such as cultural prerequisites, international conventions, legal frameworks and institutional systems are taken into account.

1.13. There is no ideal or prototypical best practice on communication and consultation. Instead, a 'best practice' or 'good practice' might to a large extent be nationally or even locally defined, in that it fits within the overall legal and regulatory structure in place. Nevertheless, regulatory bodies of all States should establish and implement mechanisms for enhancing transparency and openness, and the participation of interested parties.

OBJECTIVE

1.14. This Safety Guide provides recommendations on meeting the safety requirements concerning communication and consultation with the public and other interested parties by the regulatory body. It addresses communication and consultation about the possible radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, and about processes and decisions of the regulatory body.

1.15. This Safety Guide can be used by authorized parties¹ in circumstances where there are regulatory requirements placed on them to communicate and consult with interested parties. It may also be used by other organizations or individuals considering their responsibilities for communication and consultation with interested parties.

¹ "An 'authorized party' is the person or organization responsible for an authorized facility or an authorized activity that gives rise to radiation risks who has been granted written permission (i.e. authorized) by the regulatory body or another governmental body to perform specified activities. The 'authorized party' for an authorized facility or activity is usually the operating organization or the registrant or licensee (although forms of authorization other than registration or licensing may apply)" [2].

SCOPE

1.16. This Safety Guide provides general recommendations on communication and consultation with interested parties by the regulatory body for all facilities and activities, for all stages in their lifetime. Further guidance and recommendations for specific facilities or activities are provided in a complementary manner by other Safety Guides.

1.17. This Safety Guide does not provide guidance on communication and consultation in a nuclear or radiological emergency, or on communication and consultation on nuclear security issues. These topics are covered in other IAEA publications [10–20]. However, it is recognized that effective communication and consultation with the public and other interested parties generally involve knowledge of all three areas of safety, nuclear security, and emergency preparedness and response. In implementing the recommended measures contained in this Safety Guide, consideration will need to be given to the protection of sensitive information [19, 20]. The need for coordination between different organizations involved in the preparedness for and response to an emergency, including the regulatory body, is not to be underestimated [10].

STRUCTURE

1.18. Section 2 of this Safety Guide provides general recommendations that should be applied to meet the relevant safety requirements. Section 3 addresses the provisions of the regulatory framework that the regulatory body should take into account when establishing means and provisions for communication and consultation with interested parties. Section 4 provides recommendations on effective leadership and describes provisions for developing and implementing a communication strategy. Section 5 provides recommendations on tools and methods for effective communication and consultation with interested parties. Appendix I and Appendix II present, respectively, examples of a template for a communication strategy and a template for a communication plan. The Annex provides explanations to aid understanding of certain terms in this Safety Guide.

2. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. This section provides general recommendations that should be applied with the aim of establishing and implementing a strategy for communication and consultation with interested parties to enhance safety.

INDEPENDENCE

2.2. The effective independence of the regulatory body is a key factor in ensuring safety. In any interaction with interested parties, the regulatory body should not be unduly influenced to take any action that could compromise safety or that would call its independence into question [21, 22]. In this respect, it is to be recalled that the final decision on regulatory matters always lies with the regulatory body.

2.3. The regulatory body is responsible for the regulatory oversight of safety and should not be biased in favour of or against the use of nuclear or radiation technologies. This message should be communicated to interested parties, including the regulatory body's own staff.

TRANSPARENCY AND OPENNESS

2.4. The concepts of transparency and openness should underlie the regulatory body's strategy for communication and consultation with interested parties, so that trust in its independence, competence, integrity and impartiality can be established.

2.5. The regulatory body should be committed to ensuring a high level of transparency and openness. To this end, the regulatory body should communicate proactively, and initiate dialogue, with the public, and should demonstrate a willingness to listen and respond to a broad variety of concerns. The regulatory body should also enable genuine participation of the public in the regulatory decision making processes.

2.6. When necessary, the regulatory body should ensure that interested parties are involved at the earliest opportunity; in certain situations, such involvement should be ensured even before formal regulatory activities have been launched, for example in review and assessment activities relating to radioactive waste

management facilities [6, 9]. The early involvement of interested parties provides the following benefits:

- It can provide early insights into the potential for ‘conflict’ situations and increase the chances of solving such problems early, at a time when a solution may be more tractable.
- It can prevent, or decrease the likelihood of, a situation where not all possible relevant aspects are taken into account, which could later prove a significant deficiency and lead to a less effective regulatory process.
- It makes it possible for interested parties to influence the regulatory process and to share their perspectives at a stage when such perspectives may be more easily incorporated into that process.

2.7. The regulatory body should communicate the arrangements for informing and involving interested parties to the interested parties.

2.8. The outcomes of communication and consultation with interested parties should be documented and made available to the interested parties.

EARNING TRUST

2.9. The regulatory body should be competent in its fields of expertise, objective, reliable, transparent and responsive, and should respect interested parties and behave fairly in interactions with them. Trust can be further enhanced by the public perception that the regulatory body has these competences. Trust, once gained, is easy to lose and it needs to be earned on a continuous basis.

2.10. For any process of participation, there needs to be a certain degree of trust among all parties. If any interested party does not trust the regulatory body in a particular process setting, it might not participate fully in the process and consequently the legitimacy of the process might be weakened.

2.11. Consultation with interested parties should be an integral part of the regulatory process. Interested parties should be regarded as an asset that can contribute knowledge to that process. The interaction of interested parties with the regulatory body should enable well informed decisions to be made and the best possible outcomes to be achieved.

PROVISIONS FOR COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

2.12. The regulatory body should take the necessary actions to meet the requirement established in para. 4.67 of GSR Part 1 (Rev. 1) [2]:

“The regulatory body, in its public informational activities and consultation, shall set up appropriate means of informing interested parties, the public and the news media about the radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, the requirements for protection of people and the environment, and the processes of the regulatory body.”

2.13. Within its budget, the regulatory body should allocate appropriate resources to support communication and consultation with interested parties [23].

2.14. The regulatory body should establish and implement appropriate arrangements for communication and consultation in order to:

- Provide interested parties with timely, reliable, comprehensive, understandable and easily accessible information on safety, radiation risks and regulatory issues.
- Establish meaningful two-way interactions with interested parties to ensure that they have fair and reasonable opportunities to provide their views. The regulatory body should listen to and strive to understand the concerns, issues and questions raised and should address them in a manner that is responsible and as understandable as possible.
- Take account of international relations and in particular transboundary relations with neighbouring countries. In this respect, together with the competent national authorities, the regulatory body should explore the possibilities of involving the interested parties of neighbouring States.

2.15. The regulatory body should adapt its methods for communication and consultation to the objectives and the expected interested parties, and in accordance with a graded approach². The methods should be used in accordance with national circumstances, and with the concerns and interests of interested parties.

² “Public information activities shall reflect the radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, in accordance with a graded approach” [2].

2.16. The regulatory body should continuously improve communication and consultation by taking into consideration other experience at the national and international levels, feedback from the interested parties, and results of evaluations of the communication and consultation activities conducted.

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

2.17. All interested parties should be given appropriate access to the information concerning safety held by the regulatory body. The regulatory body should facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making such information widely available. While some sensitive information cannot be disclosed (e.g. information concerning nuclear security, proprietary information), any restriction on information should be kept to a minimum and fully justified on the basis of national legislative criteria.

2.18. The regulatory body should ensure that information on access to administrative and judicial review procedures is made available to any interested party [22].

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1. The regulatory body should identify — in regulations or legislation, or by other mechanisms — means and provisions for effective communication and consultation with interested parties [2, 3]. Such means and provisions may include, where appropriate:

- Mechanisms for involving interested parties in relevant decision making processes, including provisions for informing interested parties in a timely and effective manner (e.g. by public notice or individually) of:
 - The proposed action (e.g. the issuing of a licence);
 - The nature of possible decisions that could be taken or a draft decision, if available;
 - The procedure by which relevant information will be provided to interested parties;
 - Whether the activity on which a decision is to be taken is subject to a national or transboundary environmental impact assessment.

- Reasonable time frames for the different stages of the regulatory process, which should allow sufficient time for informing interested parties and for enabling them to prepare and participate effectively.

3.2. The regulatory body should place requirements on authorized parties to inform and, when appropriate, consult interested parties about the radiation risks associated with the operation of a facility or the conduct of activities, including the results of the safety assessment [4]. The regulatory body should also place requirements on authorized parties to make available to relevant interested parties decisions with regard to measures for protection and safety [3]. These requirements should be specified in regulations promulgated by the regulatory body, in the authorization or by other legal means.

3.3. The regulatory body should carefully scrutinize prospective changes in regulatory requirements, in order to evaluate the possible impact on the existing regulatory framework in which communication and consultation with interested parties is carried out. The regulatory body should inform and, as necessary, consult interested parties regarding the basis for such proposed changes in regulatory requirements.

3.4. When several authorities have responsibilities for safety within the regulatory framework, the provisions established for ensuring effective coordination between them for relevant regulatory activities should address communication and consultation aspects.

3.5. The regulatory body should make available safety related information, subject to exceptions provided for under national law [21, 24–26]. Specific time limits should be established within which information requested should be made available, in order to avoid unnecessary delay. Reasons for non-disclosure of information may include:

- International relations, national defence or public security, including nuclear security [18–20];
- The confidentiality of the proceedings of public authorities, where such confidentiality is provided for under national law;
- The course of justice, the ability of a person to receive a fair trial or the ability of a public authority to conduct an enquiry of a criminal or disciplinary nature;
- The confidentiality of commercial or industrial information, where such confidentiality is protected by law in order to protect a legitimate economic interest;

- Intellectual property rights;
- The confidentiality of personal data and files relating to a person, where that person has not consented to the disclosure of the information to the public, and where such confidentiality is provided for under national law;
- The interests of a third party that has supplied the information but where that party was not under or was not capable of being put under a legal obligation to supply the information, and where that party does not consent to the release of the material.

3.6. Refusal of a written request for information should be provided in writing. A refusal should state the legal basis for not disclosing the information and should briefly describe how the decision to deny the request for information was taken. The refusal should be made as soon as possible and within specific time limits established by the regulatory body.

3.7. The regulatory decision making processes should be reviewed regularly to identify opportunities for improving communication and consultation with interested parties.

4. IMPLEMENTATION BY REGULATORY BODY

4.1. This section addresses the provisions that should be developed and implemented by the regulatory body to ensure a transparent and open approach to communicating and consulting with interested parties [21]. These provisions include leadership and strategy, and a management system for effective implementation. This section also addresses elements that should be considered when developing any communication and consultation process, and provides some examples of interested parties.

LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGY

4.2. Senior management should provide leadership and a clear commitment to a high level of transparency and openness in regulatory activities, going beyond, when practicable, the minimum level imposed by laws and regulations, while ensuring compliance with legislation and regulations. Merely following the minimum legal and regulatory requirements in an administrative way can result in a low level of meaningful public participation. Efforts should be made to promote

the importance of, and to support, an organizational culture of transparency and openness among the regulatory body's own staff.

4.3. A communication strategy appropriate for the role and functions of the regulatory body should be developed and implemented (see Appendix I). This strategy should be integrated within the overall strategy of the regulatory body.

4.4. Clear responsibilities for communication and consultation activities should be established within the regulatory body.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND COMPETENCE

4.5. Arrangements for communication and consultation with interested parties should be part of the regulatory body's management system. Such arrangements should be part of a formal process that is based on specified policies and principles and associated criteria, and that follows specified procedures and guidance.

4.6. The regulatory body should develop a process for responding to the concerns of interested parties in a systematic manner.

4.7. When several governmental authorities have responsibilities for safety or have authority that overlaps with that of the regulatory body, constructive liaison should be achieved through relevant means (e.g. memoranda of understanding, periodic meetings) to ensure effective communication, consultation and, as necessary, coordination.

4.8. The regulatory body should develop and maintain its competence to communicate and consult with interested parties in an efficient and professional manner. Staff members involved in communicating with interested parties should be trained accordingly, including in public outreach techniques (e.g. facilitation of public meetings, conduct of press conferences, use of social media).

4.9. The regulatory body may use external professional support for communication and consultation (e.g. communication experts, translators, web site designers, meeting facilitators or moderators, academics). Such support could complement the competences of the regulatory body staff and provide new ideas and methods to make communication and consultation more effective.

4.10. An information and knowledge management system should be established to allow staff easy access to historical information on past incidents and

emergencies, inspection reports, annual reports, information brochures, fact sheets and other relevant publications and information [24]. Such a system will help to provide interested parties with requested information in a timely manner. Information and knowledge management arrangements should also be established under this system, to manage relevant records relating to communication and consultation activities.

4.11. Procedures should be developed regarding: (a) the types of information that can be released to the public; and (b) the way in which information should be made available to interested parties (use of media, the Internet and other channels; schedules for releasing information; use of easily understandable information; the languages to be used (e.g. in States where several languages are used)).

4.12. When relevant, and provided it can do so without compromising its independence, the regulatory body should consider participating in meetings, conferences or other public gatherings sponsored by other organizations.

INTERESTED PARTIES

4.13. Different interested parties may have different needs or agendas. Therefore, it is important to identify the interested parties, and to determine their particular interests, needs, expectations and concerns. This is essential for selecting effective options from a variety of strategies and approaches to communication and consultation. Interested parties differ from State to State, depending on culture, history, government philosophy, and legal and organizational factors. The following paragraphs briefly describe the roles of typical interested parties.

Public

4.14. The public relies on various sources of information to form its opinion. News media, especially television and both printed and on-line press, have a large impact on how people perceive issues. Social media also have significant influence.

4.15. People living in the vicinity of a facility or activity usually have different needs than the public living elsewhere [27, 28]. The importance of the role of community leaders — such as local elected officials and religious and social leaders — in framing public perception should not be underestimated.

News and social media

4.16. News and social media are important tools for the regulatory body to communicate with interested parties. Usually, there is no way to control how a message is disseminated through the media; for this reason, all communications with the media should be concise and in easily understandable language.

Local liaison groups (or committees)

4.17. Local liaison groups (or committees) with an interest in local initiatives in respect of a particular facility may be organized in accordance with legal requirements or in response to local requests for information and dialogue with the public, as well as for education purposes. Local liaison groups comprise individuals having a special interest regarding the safety of the facility (e.g. local elected officials, trade union representatives, local association representatives). The regulatory body may work with such local liaison groups to provide the local population with independent information, in addition to the information that is being provided by authorized parties and by special interest groups.

Special interest groups

4.18. Special interest groups are linked to particular constituencies that are often motivated to achieve specific goals. They include non-governmental organizations such as labour unions, consumer groups, environmental groups and anti-nuclear groups. Special interest groups can be a valuable resource in highlighting issues that may otherwise be neglected and in providing input from new angles.

Governmental authorities and decision makers

4.19. Within the governmental, legal and regulatory infrastructure, consultation and the exchange of information among governmental bodies and other regulatory authorities are paramount for the coherent and efficient regulation of safety [2, 21].

4.20. The regulatory body should establish provisions for effective and direct communication with other governmental authorities at a high level when necessary for effectively performing the functions of the regulatory body.

4.21. Elected officials should be kept informed of the regulatory body's actions in protecting people and the environment, and in relation to safety related events.

Professional bodies

4.22. The regulatory body should engage in dialogue with professional bodies (e.g. operating organizations and their supply chain, facility designers, radiation source users, medical societies) when necessary, including in the drafting of regulatory requirements [2, 3, 8]. The regulatory body should provide safety related information to professional bodies. Such information may include new developments relating to safety regulation, and findings relating to protection and safety gained from regulatory experience and operating experience, and from incidents, including accidents.

4.23. Medical professionals and health professionals can be among the most credible sources of information for the public. Information provided by the regulatory body to these parties should be tailored to their needs.

4.24. Academics, teachers and researchers in relevant fields (e.g. the nuclear field, the medical area), and other third party experts who are not involved in commercial uses of nuclear technologies and other applications using ionizing radiation can help provide information to the news media and the public as experts. This applies in particular to advisory bodies and support organizations that provide the regulatory body with external technical and other expert opinion and advice.

International organizations and national regulatory bodies

4.25. The regulatory body should establish links with other national regulatory bodies and with international organizations such as the IAEA. The regulatory body should communicate all relevant information with such organizations, including feedback from operating experience and regulatory experience [2, 23].

Staff of the regulatory body

4.26. The regulatory body's own staff communicates with the public, both formally and informally, on a routine basis. Therefore all staff should be kept informed about the decisions and activities of the regulatory body, and other relevant safety related information. They should be made aware that their communication might affect the public's perception of the regulatory body, particularly when using media channels that can reach large audiences (e.g. statements to journalists, comments on web sites, social media).

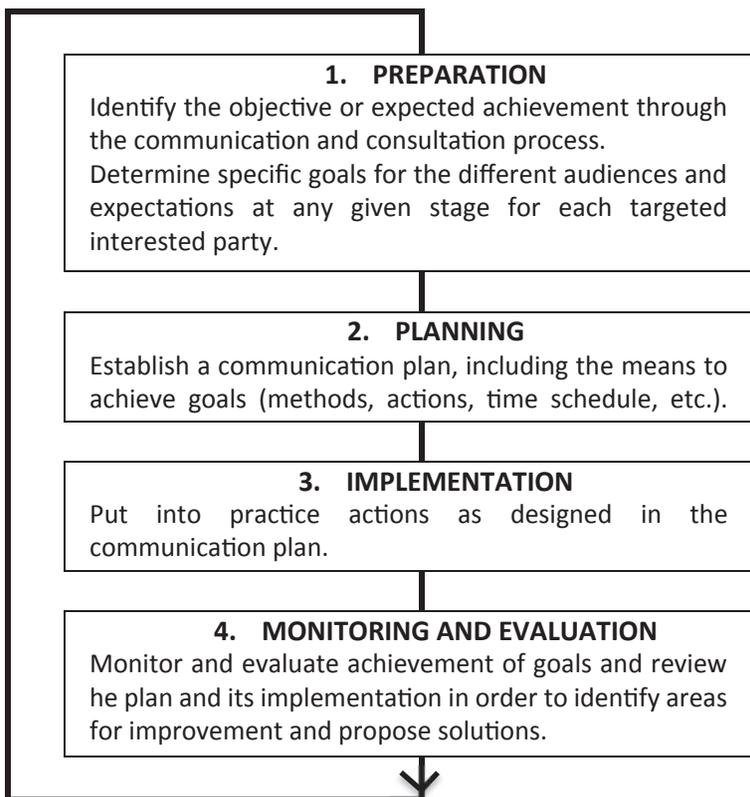


FIG. 1. Steps in the communication and consultation process.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

4.27. As shown in Fig. 1, a communication and consultation process should include a series of steps, from identifying the objective to evaluating the consultation process and identifying areas for improvement.

4.28. Before any communication or consultation process is initiated, the role and functions of the regulatory body, its independence, and its strategy for interacting with interested parties need to be clear. The legal and regulatory requirements for a communication and consultation process should also be identified, including requirements applicable to restriction of disclosure of information.

4.29. Through the communication and consultation process, the limits of what the regulatory body can and cannot do should be made clear. If interested parties

have unrealistic expectations, they are more likely to be disappointed and lose confidence in the process and in the regulatory body itself.

Preparation

4.30. A communication strategy should include a logical, coherent and efficient process for communicating and consulting with interested parties. This process should allow the regulatory body to, inter alia [2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 22, 23, 29–32]:

- Increase public trust and confidence in the regulatory body by keeping the public informed in a transparent and open manner about how safety requirements are established and enforced. The results of evaluation of the organization and performance of the regulatory body through self-assessment and through external assessments such as Integrated Regulatory Review Service missions should be made available to the public.
- Disseminate information on safety to interested parties, such as information on incidents in facilities and activities, including accidents and abnormal occurrences, as well as radiation risks associated with facilities and activities.
- Publish or make available on request, as appropriate, results from source monitoring and environmental monitoring programmes and assessments of doses from public exposure.
- Communicate on requirements for protecting people and the environment; processes of the regulatory body; and regulatory judgements and decisions, and the bases for them, including those relating to optimization of protection and safety and limitation of risks to individuals.
- Notify interested parties of the principles and associated criteria for safety established in its regulations and guides, and make its regulations and guides available.
- Involve interested parties in the decision making process through consultation or collaboration mechanisms. In this respect, interested parties residing in the vicinity of current or proposed authorized facilities and activities should, when appropriate, be consulted by means of an open, inclusive and responsive process.
- Receive such documents and opinions from interested parties as may be considered necessary and appropriate.
- Cooperate with other authorities and governmental organizations.
- Cooperate with other States and with international organizations.

4.31. The overall objective of the communication and consultation process should be established by use of the rationales mentioned in para. 1.11 concerning accountability, credibility and legitimacy, high quality in regulatory decision making, and independence.

4.32. The communication and consultation process should be flexible enough so that specific communication plans can be tailored to target audiences, depending on the types of interested party that are involved in a particular issue, facility or activity. A variety of communication tools, methodologies and subject matter expertise should be available within the regulatory body to give maximum flexibility to staff when developing communication plans.

4.33. The regulatory body should ensure that adequate resources are available to achieve the goals of the communication and consultation process.

Planning

4.34. For effective and efficient implementation of the communication and consultation process, a communication plan should be established (see Appendix II). This is a key tool for properly addressing a specific issue and for efficient use of the human and financial resources available for communication and consultation with interested parties.

4.35. For effective communication and consultation, specific and adapted methods and organizational approaches should be employed in accordance with:

- The legal and regulatory requirements;
- The goals for informing and involving interested parties;
- The nature of the interested parties to be targeted and their concerns and expectations;
- The topics and the issues involved.

4.36. A communication plan should include the overall objectives, key messages, and appropriate timing and resources to engage interested parties; a list of interested parties to be consulted and their concerns, expectations and perspectives; and channels and tools for communicating and consulting with them. Responsibilities and prioritizations should also be addressed. The communication plan should be sufficiently flexible to take account of possible changes.

4.37. In developing a communication plan, groups that could be affected by or interested in the issue should be identified. Such groups may have conflicting agendas, priorities, sensibilities, needs and expectations, all of which should be taken into account in the communication plan. Specific attention should be given to people residing in the vicinity of facilities or activities.

4.38. Different communication plans could be developed by the regulatory body for different purposes (e.g. for routine circumstances) or for specific aspects of a complex project (e.g. the siting of a radioactive waste repository, the remediation of legacy sites with contamination). The development of such different communication plans by the regulatory body should be effectively coordinated and made subject to approval so as to optimize the use of financial and human resources and to ensure coherence and consistency among plans. Consistent use of communication plans helps ensure efficient implementation of the communication strategy.

4.39. Communication plans will differ depending on the issue being addressed. For some issues, simply the provision of information may be sufficient, whereas for a more complex, major issue (e.g. licensing of a new nuclear installation, the siting of a radioactive waste repository), the regulatory body may decide to implement a specific process to give interested parties the possibility to participate actively and to be involved, when appropriate, from the very beginning of the decision making process.

4.40. The needs of interested parties range between the need for information only and the need for active participation in and consultation as part of the decision making process. Some interested parties may be reluctant to participate fully in the consultation process in order to preserve their independence and autonomy. Such differing needs of interested parties should be considered when developing a communication plan.

4.41. The communication plan may combine different approaches and methods in accordance with the purposes, issues, people and groups involved. The regulatory body should take into account cultural, organizational and other relevant factors in deciding how best to make information available to the largest number of people possible. Such an approach will decrease the likelihood that people will decide not to participate in, or to withdraw from, the process.

Implementation

4.42. The senior management of the regulatory body should be made responsible for ensuring implementation of the communication plan. Staff involved in communication and consultation should understand the purpose of the plan, their own functions and responsibilities, and how the various organizations will interact. The necessary training for proper implementation of the plan should be carried out.

4.43. Activities that are carried out should be recorded. Regular reviews of the progress of the communication plan should be carried out. Any difficulties with its implementation should be identified and any necessary adjustments should be made.

4.44. The use of the communication plan should be flexible, as its content may evolve throughout its implementation. Events may lead to changes in the priorities of the regulatory body, which may necessitate amending the communication plan's schedule or key messages.

Monitoring and evaluation

4.45. The regulatory body should monitor and regularly evaluate its communication and consultation process to identify successes, lessons and potential improvements to help the process achieve its overall objectives and to enhance public confidence in the regulatory system.

4.46. Such reviews should consider the expectations and opinions of interested parties, including the staff of the regulatory body. The regulatory body should actively solicit feedback from interested parties. The expectations and opinions of interested parties may be collected in a variety of ways, including by means of the regulatory body's web site, email campaigns or monitoring of mass media, or by the use of more sophisticated tools, for example surveys of the public or 'satisfaction committees'³.

³ A 'satisfaction committee' generally consists of representatives of the regulatory body, the public and other relevant interested parties, including the media, non-governmental organizations and governmental bodies. At their meetings, members of the satisfaction committee will review the extent to which the communication and consultation process has improved the credibility, transparency and openness of the regulatory body and enhanced satisfaction levels.

4.47. The regulatory body should also put in place procedures for dealing with unsolicited requests for information, and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these procedures.

4.48. Benchmarking against other experiences in communication and consultation with interested parties at the national and international levels should be considered, although political, cultural and societal differences may limit the extent to which this is possible.

5. METHODS OF COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

5.1. Depending on the issue, communication and consultation activities may necessitate only the provision of information or may involve fuller participation of interested parties. More interactive participation gives interested parties the possibility of a better understanding of complex issues. It allows them to develop their understanding of the issue, to debate, to state their position and, in some instances, to collaborate with the regulatory body. Various communication and consultation methods are outlined below.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

5.2. The regulatory body should routinely make as much information as possible available to interested parties. This should include the relevant legal and regulatory requirements; conclusions from reviews and assessments, including critical comments; findings of inspections; and regulatory decisions [25]. The regulatory body should also inform interested parties about its strategy, policies, procedures and management system.

5.3. The regulatory body should make available information on events that might affect safety. Specific tools should be used for promptly and consistently communicating the safety significance of events. For instance, a Member

State may decide to use the joint IAEA and OECD Nuclear Energy Agency International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES)⁴.

5.4. All information delivered by the regulatory body should be easily understandable, reliable, based on facts and evidence, accessible, and provided in a timely manner.

5.5. The regulatory body should ensure that relevant parts of the safety case and supporting safety assessment provided by the authorized party for facilities and activities are easily understandable [5, 8]. This means that they should be written in such a way that the interested parties for whom the documents are intended can gain a good understanding of the safety arguments and their bases.

5.6. The regulatory body should publish an annual report on safety to provide interested parties with as comprehensive a picture as possible of the national safety infrastructure and the actual status of nuclear and radiation safety, as well as information on regulatory activities, decisions and judgements.

5.7. The regulatory body should take special care to ensure the consistency of background information and key messages. The annual report should be used as a basis for ensuring this consistency.

5.8. Information should be conveyed through a variety of communication channels, either general or targeted to specific audiences. Such channels could be

⁴ INES is used to classify events according to their safety significance to facilitate a common understanding between the technical community, the media and the public. INES comprises seven levels from 1 (anomaly) to 7 (major accident). Events without safety significance are classified as “below scale/Level 0”, and events that have no safety relevance with respect to radiation or nuclear safety are not classified on the scale. As highlighted in the definition of the term ‘accident’ in the IAEA Safety Glossary [33] (*italic denotes a term with an entry in the IAEA Safety Glossary*):

“There is a fundamental mismatch between the terminology used in *safety standards* and the designations used in *INES*. In short, *events* that would be considered *accidents* according to the *safety standards* definition may be *accidents* or *incidents* (i.e. not *accidents*) in *INES* terminology”.

This definition also points out that this discrepancy is “a potential cause of confusion in communication with the news media and the public”. The emergency response classification system is not to be confused with INES. INES is used for communicating to the public the severity or estimated severity of an event and cannot be used as the basis for emergency response actions [10]. The relevant IAEA publications provide more information on INES [10, 17, 34, 35].

uncontrolled by the regulatory body (e.g. interviews with journalists, television programmes, Internet discussion forums) or controlled by the regulatory body (e.g. the regulatory body's web site, brochures).

5.9. Communication channels should be selected with the aim of most easily reaching the intended audience. They should be combined in a complementary manner, considering that some people may have access to only a limited number of tools for communication and information. For example, some members of the public might not have access to the Internet or know how to use it.

5.10. The regulatory body should consider using or participating in educational activities (e.g. seminars, educational films made available on the Internet, university courses) to provide, explain and discuss factual, independent and non-biased information on radiation risks associated with facilities and activities, and on the regulatory body's own processes and decisions. This approach is recognized as an effective way to increase the knowledge and understanding of interested parties on such those topics.

5.11. Different types of printed material should be used to provide information, such as information sheets, leaflets and brochures.

5.12. Press conferences or technical briefings for the media should be organized, when appropriate, to announce important information or explain complex issues that are subject to significant media or public interest. Press conferences and technical media briefings should be announced in a timely manner, and advance information may be provided to facilitate the participation of journalists. If possible, press conferences should be recorded and made available on the Internet.

5.13. The Internet is a very effective channel of communication. Large quantities of focused information can be made widely accessible and delivered through this channel, in different languages when necessary. The regulatory body should use its web site as one of the key tools to communicate with the public and other interested parties. This facilitates the dissemination of updated information and the collection of concerns, questions and comments. The regulatory body should also consider using other Internet based tools such as social networks and discussion forums, bearing in mind the specific characteristics of these tools (e.g. users' expectations regarding the speed and frequency with which content is published) and the resources needed to ensure that they are effective.

5.14. Internet based tools used by the regulatory body (e.g. web sites, social networks, on-line encyclopaedias) should be user friendly and kept up to date. Internet based tools should enable interested parties to efficiently retrieve information, submit questions and provide comments.

5.15. The extent to which information is made publicly available depends on the national legislative criteria. If the regulatory body provides general information to the extent possible and explains the reasons for withholding any details, interested parties usually will understand the need for such restrictions, as long as such rules are applied properly and are not abused.

PROVISIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

General provisions for participation

5.16. The effective participation of interested parties (through dialogue, consultation, collaboration, or a combination thereof) is essential for furthering understanding of the issues by both sides and clarifying the issues in question [28]. The regulatory body should strongly encourage effective participation when appropriate, including, when necessary, by government representatives and local elected officials. The provisions for participation by interested parties should be clearly explained as early as possible. Interested parties with different viewpoints should be given opportunities to participate in the communication and consultation process.

5.17. Proceeding step by step and setting goals for the participation process may be beneficial, and such an approach should be considered. If, on the other hand, the decision making process is close to the final stage, participation should be oriented more toward supporting decision making by clarifying the remaining options.

5.18. The relationships between the participation process and political and regulatory issues should be clarified as much as possible at an early stage.

5.19. The participation process should include discussions on the form and the structure of the decision making process and the regulatory process, as much as on their technical and scientific contents. Enough time for proper participation should be allowed for.

5.20. It can be beneficial to the development of the participation process, both for practical work and for research purposes, to obtain a broader perspective by involving international experts in related fields. The aim should be to systematically gather experience and views and to draw comparisons with similar situations in other States.

5.21. The possibility of forming new initiatives and taking part in the participation process may be dependent on the resources of interested parties. Therefore, the regulatory body should consider the possibility of providing support to enable interested parties to contribute more fully.

Dialogue

5.22. In some cases, to increase the effectiveness of communication, a dialogue should be established between the regulatory body and interested parties [5]. A dialogue is an exchange of information based on discussions between two or more parties as equals and with mutual respect. Even if no consensus can be reached at the end of the process, all participants should have the possibility to express and discuss their positions and views in order to further one another's understanding of the issues. Depending on the complexity or sensitivity of the issue being discussed, the dialogue process may take time and require multiple exchanges.

5.23. For a successful dialogue, it is important to establish the working format. This should include the provision of a 'safe space'. A 'safe space' is an environment in which all interested parties can participate without fear of reprisal and without committing themselves to any kind of consensus building.

5.24. Specific arrangements for dialogue should be agreed upon, and adhered to, by participants. Such arrangements could include the timing of meetings, choice of venues, management of discussions, facilitation of the debate, agreements on the credibility of the process itself and reports of the discussion.

5.25. Public meetings may be conducted at the national or local level as part of the process of dialogue. Public meetings allow direct verbal communication between participants to share information, discuss developments, and obtain comments and opinions. To gain the maximum benefit from a public meeting, all aspects of it should be thoroughly prepared. The targeted interested parties should be informed in a timely manner regarding the scope, purpose, planning, venue and agenda of the meeting. Attention should be paid to the conduct of the meeting to ensure fruitful dialogue between participants.

Consultation

5.26. In accordance with national legal and regulatory provisions, such as those relating to the licensing process [27] or the development and implementation of protection strategies for existing exposure situations [3], the regulatory body should consult with interested parties. In addition, the regulatory body should also consider asking for input on other issues such as complex or major topics (e.g. when drafting legislation or regulations).

5.27. For each of the different stages of consultation, appropriate communication channels and tools should be used. The use of the Internet and the conduct of meetings with interested parties are two specific channels that seem particularly adapted to consultation. In all cases, the roles and responsibilities of each interested party should be explained to all participants.

5.28. Consultation includes several different stages, which should be followed to comply with legal and regulatory requirements and to give the process a better chance to succeed. To design a consultation procedure, the following aspects should be considered:

- Clarification of the objectives of the consultation;
- Identification of targeted interested parties;
- Identification of applicable legal and regulatory requirements;
- Establishment of plans and time frames that are sufficient for effective participation and are adapted in accordance with the needs of the interested parties;
- Preparation of relevant documents to be published or otherwise made publicly available;
- Establishment of mechanisms and tools for consulting with interested parties and for enabling for them to comment, directly or through representative consultative bodies;
- Conduct of public meetings, formal hearings and other appropriate means of consultation;
- Establishment of provisions for reviewing and considering the results of the consultation in the decision making process.

5.29. When necessary, and in order to ensure the proper organization and effective conduct of the consultation, the regulatory body should meet with the relevant applicants or authorized parties and relevant governmental authorities and agencies early in the process.

5.30. A process of consultation should start with the provision of initial information to targeted interested parties. This information should include a clear explanation of the issue(s) (e.g. a new regulation, a licensing decision), the process (e.g. planning and timescale, activities such as public meetings, use of the Internet) and the way the final outcome will be reached.

5.31. Interested parties should be provided with access to relevant information relating to the consultation, free of charge and at designated locations. Interested parties should be given the possibility to comment freely and sufficient time to do so, and it should be explained how their comments will be taken into account in the process.

5.32. The arrangements for consultation should allow interested parties to submit, in writing or, as appropriate, orally at public hearings, meetings or inquiries, any comments, information, analyses or opinions that they consider to be relevant.

5.33. The regulatory body should review the results of consultation and should take them into account, where appropriate. These results and how they have been considered should be made publicly available.

5.34. The regulatory body should promptly inform interested parties of its final decision in accordance with the appropriate procedures and should make the text of the decision, along with the reasons and considerations on which the decision is based, available to interested parties.

Collaboration

5.35. To explore potential solutions to regulatory issues, such as the development of regulations, policies and guidance, a collaborative process may be implemented to directly involve different interested parties. In this way, involved interested parties are active participants in developing a regulatory process with a focus on finding common ground.

5.36. Different mechanisms may be used to make a collaborative process efficient. The mechanisms used should encourage interaction among participants and give them the opportunity to provide, discuss and debate their perspectives. In the discussion, the concerns and interests behind the participants' positions on the issues should be identified. This allows the participants to find common ground in the resolution of the issues.

5.37. Before starting a collaborative process, the scope, objective, main steps, timescale, and participants should be established, although these may need to remain flexible.

5.38. A collaborative process may include task groups made up of a limited number of representatives of interested parties. A task group may be beneficial in the development of a possible draft solution prior to consideration of the issue in the wider collaborative process.

Appendix I

EXAMPLE OF A TEMPLATE FOR A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

I.1. Paragraph 4.3 of this Safety Guide states that “A communication strategy appropriate for the role and functions of the regulatory body should be developed and implemented.... This strategy should be integrated within the overall strategy of the regulatory body.”

TITLE, Period of validity

Purpose and vision

The purpose of the communication strategy and the vision of the regulatory body for the long term should be described. The values of the organization may also be highlighted in this section. Transparency and openness should guide the communication strategy.

Key messages

The top three or four key messages should be identified, so that these can be conveyed throughout all of the communication activities conducted by the regulatory body.

Interested parties

The regulatory body should identify its key interested parties that the communication strategy will reach through the implementation of the strategy.

Communication strategy

This section describes how the communication and consultation can help to achieve the mission and the vision of the regulatory body. For example:

- For the staff of the regulatory body, it may address the improvement of the communication and consultation system; the support of organizational changes within the regulatory body; and the promotion of safety culture, transparency and openness.

- For other interested parties, it may address dialogue with the public, engagement of the news media, participation in industrial forums and the establishment of relations with relevant organizations in other States or with relevant international organizations.

Evaluation

This section should outline how the regulatory body evaluates its communication and consultation process, and how it will incorporate or adjust its strategy, when necessary.

Appendix II

EXAMPLE OF A TEMPLATE FOR A COMMUNICATION PLAN

II.1. Paragraph 4.34 of this Safety Guide states that “For effective and efficient implementation of the communication and consultation process, a communication plan should be established. . . . This is a key tool for properly addressing a specific issue and for efficient use of the human and financial resources available for communication and consultation with interested parties.”

TITLE, Date

Key messages

This section should contain a bulleted list of a limited number of main messages on a specific issue that the regulatory body wants to convey to interested parties. Each message should be no longer than two sentences (three at the very most) and should be written in easily understandable language. These are not to be duplicates of the regulatory body’s strategic goals.

Background

This section should present a brief history of the relevant issue and an explanation of why the communication plan is needed. It should be as long as necessary to be helpful to people not fully immersed in the topic, but not so detailed as to be unwieldy and thus not useful. Relevant legal and regulatory provisions should be included, as should the actual results of previous communication plans, when relevant.

Audience

This section should list the interested parties, including those within the regulatory body, who should be targeted by the communication and consultation tools listed later in the communication plan. The list could also outline the parties’ concerns, expectations and perspectives.

Communication team

This section should list the names and contact information of the staff members responsible for implementation of the communication plan.

The team leader and the backup for the team leader should be identified. The team should typically consist of relevant experts who work on the issue and the relevant communication staff. All those listed as having responsibilities with regard to implementation of the communication plan should be aware that they are listed.

Communication channels and tools

The number and type of tools will depend on the message, audience, timing, resources and legal and regulatory requirements.

Such tools could include:

- Meetings;
- Press conferences;
- Speeches;
- Forums or seminars;
- Public information centre;
- Talking points;
- Reports, including annual reports;
- Press releases;
- Advertisements;
- Newsletters;
- Brochures, posters or fliers;
- Videos;
- Transcripts;
- Lists of frequently asked questions and fact sheets;
- Web pages;
- Social media;
- Direct mailings;
- Phone calls.

Schedule

This is useful to ensure that activities are well coordinated within the regulatory body or with different interested parties. The schedule should detail communication and consultation activities.

Challenges

The communication plan should address potential controversies, pre-identified key interested parties, important timing elements, etc. Each challenge identified should be linked to specific steps being taken to overcome it.

Evaluation

This section should include an identification of the successes and lessons identified in implementation of the communication plan to date.

Questions and answers

A list of questions and their possible answers should be developed to anticipate questions raised by interested parties. These answers should be easily understandable and made available in written form.

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Annex

USE OF TERMS

A-1. In this Safety Guide, the following terms are used. Explanations are provided in this Annex to aid understanding of the text, but they do not represent consensus definitions of the terms as they are used in the IAEA safety standards¹.

Communication

Exchange of information between an organization and its interested parties for the purpose of informing, influencing, persuading or developing a common understanding in pursuit of an organization's long term objectives, and of serving the public interest for safety.

Communication plan (or communication and consultation plan)

A plan to implement the communication strategy in relation to a specific issue or facility. It may be relatively short term (e.g. regarding an emerging issue such as a licensing review) or cover routine regulatory activities such as transport of radioactive materials or management of radioactive waste. It may also be long term (e.g. to continue exchange of information and communication regarding development of new regulatory policies).

Communication strategy

A long term framework of policies and arrangements for the regulatory body to inform and consult with interested parties. The strategy encourages communication and consultation as being important for the success of the regulatory body's efforts to ensure the protection of people and the environment. The communication strategy helps to ensure openness and transparency by guiding the regulatory body's interactions with interested parties during the course of various regulatory actions, including regulatory development, licensing reviews, inspections and enforcement. As such, an effective communication strategy is essential for gaining public trust and protecting the regulatory body's credibility.

¹ INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY, IAEA Safety Glossary: Terminology Used in Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection, 2016 Revision, IAEA, Vienna (in preparation).

Consultation

Refers to processes through which the regulatory body seeks or, in accordance with the national legal framework, has to seek the views of interested parties on regulatory matters that affect the decision making process, that affect interested parties directly or in which they have a significant interest. Consultation can occur at various points in the regulatory process and can be used to help frame an issue, identify or assess options and evaluate existing regulatory policies.

Transparency and openness

These are concepts:

- By which information relating to the regulatory body’s responsibilities, including its decision making process, is proactively made easily accessible to and understandable by interested parties;
- That promote active participation of interested parties in decision making, in order to enable full consideration of their views and opinions.

These concepts refer to a model based on involvement of interested parties as early as possible in a decision making process (e.g. an ‘engage, interact and cooperate’ model). In most States, this model has been replacing the traditional model, which undertakes communication with the public and other interested parties late in the process, or even after the decision has been taken (e.g. a ‘decide, announce and defend’ model). One of the most important challenges in implementing these concepts is the natural tension between the aim of achieving transparency and openness, and legally required restrictions in disclosure of information.

CONTRIBUTORS TO DRAFTING AND REVIEW

Addison, P.	Office for Nuclear Regulation, United Kingdom
Ahmed, B.	Radiation Protection Centre, Ministry of Environment, Iraq
Ali, F.	Atomic Energy Licensing Board, Malaysia
Alonso Gonzalez, I.	National Nuclear Safety Centre, Cuba
Andersson, K.	KARITA, Sweden
Aoyama, Y.	Nuclear Regulation Authority, Japan
Babakhani, A.	Iran Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Islamic Republic of Iran
Baldassarri, P.	SOGIN, Italy
Bouchot, E.	Nuclear Safety Authority, France
Brenner, E.	Nuclear Regulatory Commission, United States of America
Busto, A.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Chanial, L.	Nuclear Safety Authority, France
De Jesus, T.	Philippine Nuclear Research Institute, Philippines
Dokter, S.	Installation and Reactor Safety Company, Germany
El Messiry, A.	Egyptian Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Authority, Egypt
Gibb, T.	Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Canada
Hueber, S.	Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate, Switzerland
Jovanovic, S.	University of Montenegro, Montenegro
Jubin, J.-R.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Kannisto, A.	Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, Finland
Khartabil, H.	International Atomic Energy Agency

Koteng, A.	Radiation Protection Board, Kenya
Körmendi, G.	Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority, Hungary
Lima, C.	National Nuclear Energy Commission, Brazil
Lorenz, P.	Friends of the Earth Europe, Austria
Lyons, J.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Maoddi, P.	SOGIN, Italy
Molin, A.	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria
Molnar, A.	Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority, Hungary
Morozov, S.	Federal Environmental, Industrial and Nuclear Supervision Service, Russian Federation
Mueller, A.	Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate, Switzerland
Mughal, N.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Muner, R.	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria
Muraj, I.	Institute of Public Health, Albania
Muskens, P.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Nicic, A.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Ouedraogo, A.	National Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Authority, Burkina Faso
Petit, E.	Nuclear Safety Authority, France
Riveros, D.	Ministry of Mines and Energy, Colombia
Samaddar, S.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Satriawan, B.	Nuclear Energy Regulatory Agency, Indonesia
Schroeder, C.	European Commission
Shadad, I.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Tschurlovits, M.	Institute of Atomic and Subatomic Physics, Austria

Videla, L.	International Atomic Energy Agency
Wieland, P.	National Nuclear Energy Commission, Brazil
Williams, G.	Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, Australia
Zeleznik, N.	Regional Environmental Center, Slovenia
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