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THE OFFICE FOR NUCLEAR REGULATION (ONR)

The ONR is responsible for the regulation of nuclear safety and security (amongst other things) at nuclear-licensed sites across Great Britain. Their mission is to provide efficient and effective regulation of the nuclear industry, holding it to account on behalf of the public. More information on ONR can be found on our factsheet on [The ONR](#).

LEGAL FRAMEWORK & FUNCTIONS

The ONR was established as a statutory Public Corporation on 1 April 2014 under section 77 of the Energy Act 2013 (hereafter referred to as ‘the Act’).

Section 78 of the Act requires ONR to do whatever it considers appropriate for “the ‘ONR’ purposes” which are defined in the Act. ONR’s main functions are to regulate nuclear safety and security, as well as conventional health and safety at licensed nuclear sites in the UK. These include the existing fleet of operating reactors, fuel cycle facilities, waste management and decommissioning sites and licensed defence sites. It also regulates the generic design and construction of new nuclear facilities, nuclear security at civil nuclear sites and the transport of nuclear and radioactive materials.

ONR remains functionally separate from the Government and the Act restricts the types of directions Ministers may give it and the conditions for dismissing senior ONR members. In the interests of transparency, section 108 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to lay in Parliament a report setting out the use of the Secretary of State’s powers exercised under Part 3 of the Act, during the year.

INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWS

ONR works with international inspectorates to ensure that the UK meets its safeguards obligations and its experts play a leading role in the work of the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for example in developing international safety and security standards and guidance, and taking part in peer review missions.

IAEA peer review missions are the principal means of gaining external, fully-independent assurance that the UK’s security and safety measures and its nuclear regulator meets the highest standards in comparison to international best practice. These include OSART (Operational Safety Review Team) which assesses safety practices at individual nuclear powerstations; IRRS (Integrated Regulatory Review Service) which assesses the effectiveness of the regulatory infrastructure for nuclear radiation, radioactive waste and transport safety, and IPPAS (International Physical Protection Advisory Service) which assesses the effectiveness of our overall security regime, including measures at individual sites.



INDEPENDENCE

The IAEA conducted Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) reviews in 2009 and in 2013, reporting before and after the passage of the Energy Act 2013 that established ONR.

Both IRRS reviews focused on ONR's independence and in 2013 the IAEA team reported that the Energy Act 2013 would '**provide de jure independence, which will reinforce the de facto independence that ONR (and its predecessors) have enjoyed for many years**'¹.

This was on the basis that ONR was independent in its regulatory functions and decisions:

- the office of Chief Nuclear Inspector was created in statute, responsible for providing independent regulatory advice to government departments and other government bodies;
- all regulatory case decisions are delegated to the CNI (as a suitably skilled, qualified and experienced person) who is directly accountable for ensuring that all regulatory decisions are proportionate, balanced and consistent.
- ONR has the financial and organisational flexibility to meet its business needs, including cost recovery from the nuclear industry it regulates, and setting its own terms and conditions for staff.

The report also noted the clear separation between:

- accountability to Parliament for the overall governance of ONR, which is provided by its sponsor department, the Department for Work and Pensions,
- the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy's own accountability for policy related to civil nuclear safety and security; and
- the Ministry of Defence's accountability for nuclear safety and security at nuclear sites operated wholly or mainly for defence purposes.

Departments work closely together and under a framework agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with ONR to ensure clear communication, appropriate alignment with government policy and priorities, while ensuring ONR's decision making and management remains independent. The IAEA conducted an expert mission in 2014, at the request of ONR and the UK government, to review progress against all existing findings from previous missions. The full reports from this and earlier IRRS missions are available at <http://www.onr.org.uk/regulatoryreview/>.

¹ <http://www.onr.org.uk/regulatoryreview/irrs-uk-2013-final-report.pdf> (page 16)