

WM2009 Conference Panel Report

Panel Session 04 The IAEA International Decommissioning Network

Panel Reporter: Paul J. C. Dinner – Scientific Secretary, IAEA

The panelists were:

- Vladimir Michal, Senior Scientist, VUJE, Inc.(Slovak Republic);
- Michele Laraia, Senior Officer, IAEA (Austria);
- Andrew Szilagyi, D&D Program Leader, US DOE (USA);
- Josef Podlaha, Nuclear Research Institute Rez PLC (Czech Republic);
- Lucien Pillette-Cousin, AREVA (France);
- William Murphie, US DOE (USA)

Laraia (#9000), in introducing the focus on international co-operation for this panel session, traced the evolution of the IAEA's D&D activities over the past two decades, concluding with a description of the role being played by the Agency's latest initiative to promote the systematic sharing of D&D lessons learned – the International Decommissioning Network (IDN). The maturation of this process from early networks and regional projects to its current form as a “network of networks” within and beyond the IAEA, where the flow of practical ideas and techniques is moving in “both directions” via between – generally developed – Member States (MS) with a long history of D&D programmes and those with more recent successes in innovation and adaptation of decommissioning knowledge. In the future the IAEA is expected to rely more on participants in Networks such as the IDN than on the direct efforts of its internal staff. This is consistent with the shift to a “topical” rather than “geographical” focus in the IAEA's support to MS.

Slovakia (Michal and Stubna, #9031) illustrates well this tendency of the “learners” to become the “masters”. Slovakia was able to use IAEA support effectively in this transition. Today, Slovakia's efforts form a cornerstone of the IDN, as it makes its successful experience available with tools for the planning of complex decommissioning tasks. Two areas are worth a particular mention here: one is the integration of geometrical and radiological data; the other is the development of software for the planning of decommissioning activities, including parameters such as man-hours and costs.

Szilagyi described the internal “Networking” experience between DOE sites as an important analogue to the IDN, and one where some of the same strategies and tools could be deployed to foster information sharing. Of particular interest to several participants was the “knowledge management” initiative DOE is undertaking with Florida State University. The value to organizations from developed MS of the questions asked by those with less developed programmes was underscored by his remark: “Less can teach you more”.

Podlaha, in his presentation on D&D co-operation between the Czech Republic and IAEA, demonstrates further evidence of the successful adaptation of complex techniques to serve the needs of research reactor dismantlement in mid-size institutions. In this regard, the Czech Republic has become a “model citizen” of the IDN, readily participating in expert missions to developing MS to share their accumulating knowledge.

Murphie described the importance of having a post-operational “road map” in the management of facilities approaching the end of their original working lives. He observed that the opportunity of DOE's

gas-diffusion plant staff contributes to the decommissioning at similar plants in the UK and France was a rewarding experience. The creativity and innovation of developing MS forced to do more with less was noted, and the Agency's role in this noted. Finally, he observed that supporting common efforts for detailed early planning allowed a greater opportunity for decontamination and recovery of major quantities of recyclable materials – a laudable goal in itself. Murphie was for a long time associated with OECD/NEA-driven international groups active on decommissioning, and this network can be considered a precursor to, and offering a model to, IDN.

Pillette-Cousin described a number of initiatives by AREVA of particular interest to the international community. Recapping decommissioning work with research reactors (e.g. SILOE at Grenoble), bituminized waste in France, and waste retrieval from the Vandellos silos in Spain, AREVA has been able to apply these skills in Eastern Europe and Asia. Design of El Cabril disposal facility and recent delivery of an incinerator to Batan address the critical problem of waste disposal for decommissioning. AREVA recently joined the IDN and looks forward to providing experts for technical missions and the hosting of training events which take advantage of its key capabilities.