



## THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC - INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

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A clear communications policy is the key to credibility and credibility is earned, not created. It is based on perceptions which give rise to varying levels of confidence. It has been consistently found in opinion research that credibility is the single most powerful persuasive force. Public communication programmes are the principal currency for the Regulatory Authority to inform the public on issues of cost, benefit, need and risk. For each issue the information needs differ and this must be reflected in the Regulatory's Authority communication programmes.

The important aspect is testing if the nuclear energy in the Slovak Republic is due to obligatory rules acceptable and its operation is regulated by the state through the independent institution - The Nuclear Regulatory Authority of the Slovak Republic (UJD).

UJD considers the whole area of public relations an essential component of its activity. UJD intends to serve the public true, systematic, qualified, understandable and independent information regarding nuclear safety of nuclear power plants, as well as regarding methods and results of UJD work. Generally, public information is considered as significant contribution to the creation of confidence into the regulatory work.

### **The communication programme in the UJD**

The public relations are understood as attempts to establish, keep and improve UJD's good relations to its neighbours through purposeful informing. The UJD already in its origins laid the foundation of a policy of keeping the public broadly informed on the UJD activities and the safety of nuclear installations in the Slovak Republic by opening the UJD Information Centre. Catering to public & media relations, the Information Centre is instrumental in forming among the public a favourable picture of independent state supervision on nuclear safety.

Professionally, the public relations at the UJD are under responsibility of the Public Information Manager, who is at the same time the press officer of the UJD. Of course, his close co-operation with all staff members is absolutely necessary. The Manager coordinates all public relations activities, but he also personally prepares press releases, writes articles, organises press conferences and communicates with TV, radio and journalists. He also monitors news in various media on subjects interesting for the UJD.

An Information centre (IC) at the offices of UJD was built and opened in October (1995) with IAEA Director General Dr. Hans Blix as the first visitor. The entrance to the office building has been rebuilt and two rooms have been reserved for information purposes. The bigger room contains the Information centre, equipped with all electronic equipment. The room is big, enough to be used as a meeting room. The press conferences are held there too. I think that the Information centre could be a good tool to spread information to schools and interesting groups (members of Parliament, governmental and non-governmental groups and journalists). Approaching the UJD by telephone or through mail should be convenient, and information must be available without requiring a lot of effort from public.

The basic rules for communication with media and with public are as follows:

- \* To inform the public about the activities of the UJD, about its responsibilities, about The Status of nuclear installations safety in the Slovak Republic
- \* To provide prompt, clear and consistent information to the public on a nuclear event

whenever and wherever they may occur

\* To facilitate an independent communication between UJD, media and the public.

### **Internal communication within UJD**

In the UJD, good internal communication within the authority forms the basis of good external communication. This is especially important, as the UJD is located both in Bratislava and in Trnava sites. Day-to-day information exchange between the two sites had been established. Daily faxes are sent from the Inspection branch at Trnava to the headquarters office every day. They deal with the status of the operations at the NPP sites. E-mail is also used for internal and external information by computer networks. As to other improvements of internal information it was noted that especially all staff meetings are held at regular intervals. This is an excellent form of internal information and for discussing external information matters.

### **Handling the media**

UJD devotes considerable effort to be visible in the press and TV in radio programmes. Good relations has been established with a Slovakia's News Agency: the Agency asks UJD regularly for information and disseminates it to journalists. The Press Officer and other employees at the UJD have written articles published in various papers and journals, including specialised journals on nuclear safety. The advantage of articles written by staff members is that you can decide how your message is forwarded without a journalist "filter". The UJD is utilising all opportunities to contact the media. The Press Officer is aware of the importance of enhancing the UJD profile as an independent, non-promoting authority. The role of the UJD as an objective authority is always stressed in the articles.

Last and this year were important for UJD in public information, because WS Atkins Science & Technology (GB) provided two courses on briefing the media in the event of nuclear accident. The courses were held in the headquarters of the Regulatory Authorities in Prague and in Bratislava. There were organised as series of mock interview interspersed with presentations on techniques and discussions, followed by a mini-exercise what required the participants to prepare press statements and hold mock press conference.

In this year was important the visits of the Health Safety Executive's Office, the British Nuclear Industry Forum, UK NEA, AEA Technology and other departments to provide an opportunity to be aware of the public information matters and the co-operation with the media in the United Kingdom and have the opportunity to speak with the people with the same interest about their way of dealing with the subject. I have gain a lot of information about the public relations and about the co-operation with the media in UK, which can be compared with ours as well as with those from our countries I have visited before and used for improving of my work in the UJD.

It is important to confer not only information but also message. The structure of a release has to comply with journalistic work: "the most important information (message) comes first, the least important last". Sometimes, it is difficult to make a release, especially if the topic is very complex. In such a case, background material should be enclosed to the release.

The basic rule for deciding who deals with the media on a particular issue is "who is the most appropriate person?". It should be someone who knows about the issue; who can speak with authority; and, who is used to dealing with the media. This will not necessarily be the most senior person available. Nevertheless, when dealing with important or high profile cases a senior officer will be needed because media representatives will expect to speak to "someone in authority".

It is important that all UJD VIP staff coming into contact with the media:

- project a positive and professional image of UJD and its work
- deliver a consistent message
- are familiar with all the facts of the situation which has aroused interest
- are sensitive to potential areas of misunderstanding
- are prepared
- avoid speculation
- inform UJD's Press Office

### **The media documents**

The media publication of UJD in the detailed annual report, written in Slovak, who has been sent to involved ministries, enterprises, nuclear installations and related industries and research institutes and related University. For public information purposes, nicely illustrated, in Slovak and English versions and has been prepared too. This version is sent to the Government, Foreign embassies in Bratislava, Embassies of Slovak Republic abroad and to other International organisations and the media.

UJD has published a bulletin, which appears three or four times annually. It cover consists of current issues regarding nuclear safety of NPPs and local and international activities of the UJD. The UJD intends to send it to the media, politician's etc. The UJD has one issue translated into English.

The relations with media have been prioritised in the UJD since beginning of activities in the Information Centre. Media release are often the only way to reach a broad public with limited resources. The disadvantage is that one cannot manage the message interpretation. It is therefore very important that the way the authority expresses its message is easy and understandable for the journalists.

The UJD has direct access to the relevant information including reporting of events through its resident inspectors. Nevertheless, the main information channel to the UJD is provided directly by the NPP staff. Daily reports on the status of individual reactor units are sent to the UJD regularly every morning. The NPP is also primarily responsible for dissemination of first appropriate information about operational events to the public.

### **The emergency preparedness and media**

The UJD has Emergency Task Group, which is divided into Reactor Safety Group, Radiation Protection Group, Logistic Group and Information Group. Information Group consists of the head of Group, the report analysis expert and news service expert. The other members are from the Emergency Preparedness Department and other staff members from UJD. The information group is responsible for public information as well as for informing the authorities. The Information Centre is situated close to the Emergency Response Centre; it intends to be used both during emergency drills as well as during real emergencies. Over the past year UJD has been working toward demonstrating its effective response to an emergency.

Information group was in all exercises responsible for co-ordinating the technical briefing material prepared by the Reactor Safety Group and Radiological Assessment Group and was produced in every exercises briefing material for National Emergency Commission for Radiation Accidents, for domestic and international organisations. Also the dissemination to the public and media was tested during these exercises. The Information Group was also preparing messages which were sent to international bodies such as IAEA and, to neighbouring countries as a part of Slovak Republic bilateral arrangements. More detailed messages were sent to Parliament and selected Ministries of the Slovak Government. Furthermore, the Information group monitored reports issued by the media in TV and radio.

### **The Activities of the UJD in last period**

Numerous missions of public relations experts from Sweden, Finland, UK., Germany and the USA helped to prepare and train UJD specialists, who manifested itself in a capability to arrange a number of seminars and meetings with schools and journalists and the periodic press conferences on major activities of the UJD. As co-ordinator of special projects of the public information division of the IAEA prepared UJD in March 1998 the seminar "Nuclear Safety and the Media".

The UJD issues the Bulletin on UJD activities for domestic and foreign public. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the IAEA, we prepared a special publication on the IAEA, organized a visit to the IAEA encompassing by reception of its director general, H.Blix, of Slovak Member of the Parliament. At the end of the 1997 year an international meeting for foreign diplomatic corps in the Slovak Republic, senior officials of the Slovak state Administration, universities, research institutes and other state authorities and organizations along with Slovak nestors who were involved in founding the IAEA and elaborating fundamental agreements on peaceful uses of atomic energy the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the IAEA was organized. Seventy-five contributions (press releases) on UJD national and foreign activities were transmitted to the Press Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR) over the course of 1998 (additionally, information was communicated to the reading and electronic media.)

In the journal "Bezpečnosť JE (Safety of Nuclear Energy)" (bimonthly), the column "Information" periodically carries briefs on UJD activities (inspection activity, organizing seminars and expert meetings, important home and foreign visits.). Very important for the UJD activities was in the year 1998 the commissioning of the NPP Mochovce.

Contributions on UJD regulatory activities and international co-operation are periodically put out in the "Slovenské elektrárne" Newsletter, the "Mochovce" and "Bohunice" in-house journal, the Slovak Nuclear Society Bulletin. Report on the Safety of NPPs in the Slovak Republic is annually published in the Journal European Nuclear Society – Nuclear Energy Worldscan. Some articles on UJD activities were published in the world information agency NucNet. The UJD issued in 1998 three editions of the internal Bulletin on the UJD's national and foreign activities and personnel. In this year were prepared 2 articles with photos documentation about the main functions, Status and activities of the UJD in connection with The World Energetic Conference in American Huston (September 1998) and special edition about the Slovakia, printed by the Spain Embassy (May 1998). The four press conferences were held in part of year 1998. Radio and TV was cover a press conference, but interviews with broadcast are usually recorded immediately after a press conference.

### **Conclusions**

UJD as the state authority provides information related to its competence, namely information on safety of operation of nuclear installations, independently from nuclear operation and it enables the public and media to examine information on nuclear installations.

More active public information activities of the UJD will significantly contribute to the public understanding on different aspects of the uses of nuclear energy and will increase the public treats in this area. There is still a worldwide opposition against nuclear energy but not in an amount as before 5 - 10 years. Using most modern and effective tools like the internet but also by presenting different and high quality materials and publications the IAEA and other international agencies could accelerate the process of public's positive attitude with respect to nuclear energy. During this year Slovakia hosted a seminar of this kind which was a great success.

A further part of the reform process is the ongoing review of the role and management of public information. The importance of public understanding of the role of nuclear energy and of the UJD demands that effective public information be an integral part of the UJD's activities.

Very important is the opinion of the IAEA Director General, that the size of the Agency's public information programme is modest (The Board of Governors, Vienna September 14-16, 1998). It is therefore all the more essential that it be effectively targeted, particularly towards the nuclear, arms control and development communities, using the most modern and effective tools. Over the coming months I will be exploring Member State interest in an expanded programme of public information seminars obvious, however, that a lot of work is still to be done, especially with the aim to assure better direct presentation of UJD to the public as a competent and independent regulatory organisation.

All UJD communication and information activities in 1998 presented here in aim to Creation of public confidence, favourable UJD image at home as well as abroad.