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*NucNet*

## **NucNet's Growing Impact on the Media – Now the Official Figures!**

**Jack Ashton and Chris Lewis, NucNet Editors**

The growing impact of NucNet on the news media has been a topic highlighted at previous PIMEs. On a couple of occasions, concrete examples have been given of NucNet being used by journalists writing about nuclear energy issues. These have consisted of newspaper clippings and copies of news agency reports. Some instances of NucNet material being used by the broadcast media have also been reported on.

It should be pointed out that we are talking here about evaluating NucNet's worth purely on the basis of news stories carried by news agencies and newspapers which actually quote NucNet as a source.

It is impossible to monitor and measure the full impact and influence that NucNet has on the reporting of nuclear. From the NucNet Central Office in Berne, it is not possible to see everything that goes on – to see how all network members pass on NucNet material to their media contacts and to see the end results.

In addition, journalists are not under some sort of legally binding agreement to always quote NucNet as the source. There have been many cases where it has been clear that NucNet material has been used without NucNet being quoted directly by name.

NucNet also influences the news judgement of journalists. For instance, a news editor might be inclined to go for a nuclear story that takes a particular (anti-nuclear) line provided by Greenpeace. But that person might have second thoughts on seeing the version of the same story supplied by NucNet, providing original information from the source directly involved. The news editor then has the opportunity to see both sides of the story and make a more accurate evaluation. With the additional information from NucNet, the result could be a properly balanced news story, or the news editor could decide to drop the story completely. Either way, we are talking about factors that are impossible to pin down and measure. In such circumstances, only case studies can be given. This means that so far the evaluation of NucNet's impact on the news media has had to be almost completely anecdotal.

Now, thanks to a comparatively new database search facility, the NucNet Central Office team is able to track instances in which NucNet has been quoted as the source for a news story or magazine article. The database is run by Reuters, but contains information from a wide range of other news sources, such as national news agencies and major national newspapers.

A search of the database, carried out on December 10th 1997, produced 42 cases of NucNet being quoted by name over the previous three years. There were five in 1995, 13 in 1996, and 24 in 1997. No fewer than 15 of the 24 cases in 1997 occurred in the preceding six months. It takes no great mathematician to see that each annual figure is roughly double that of the preceding 12-month period.

We can at least see every instance of NucNet being quoted by Reuters, but this of course does not cover the other major international news agencies, such as the Associated Press, UPI and AFP. This underlines the fact that NucNet Central Office and the NucNet Board rely heavily on individual network members spontaneously reporting examples of media use. The results obtained recently, showing regular and fairly frequent use by Reuters and the print media, but the figures do not give the full picture.

If the database, known as Reuters Business Briefing, acts as some sort of barometer measuring NucNet's impact on the news media, we cannot say exactly what the weather is like – but at least we can say that the barometer reading is on the increase. And for once we can give definite figures.