COVID-19 measures in Switzerland

Report by ENSI to the 48th Meeting of the Commission on Safety Standards

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Situation in the supervisory body

The Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI is fully operational despite the extraordinary situation since the COVID-19 outbreak.

In summer, the COVID protection measures were relaxed. Since the beginning of October, the number of cases in Switzerland has risen sharply. The ENSI has therefore again reduced the number of staff in its office building.

The staff works from home whenever possible, and meetings are held by videoconferencing. ENSI has established a “pandemic task force” which monitors the situation and suggests protection measures and their eventual relaxation to the Executive Management Board. Most ENSI staff has reported that apart from occasional technical glitches, they are able to carry out their work from home office satisfactorily. Currently 10-20 % of ENSI staff is working in the ENSI offices.

There have been very few COVID-19 cases reported from ENSI staff to date.

Oversight activities: Inspections

In spring many inspections were postponed until autumn. ENSI is therefore currently carrying out all regular inspections as planned. Most inspections are being carried out but with minimum ENSI staff on site. The large topical inspections that should have taken place in all installations this spring have been postponed until spring 2021.

Situation in the NPPs

Currently, all Swiss nuclear power plants (NPPs) are in full operation. During this health crisis, there were no operational restrictions for the power plants at any point in time. All NPPs implemented pandemic plans early on to prevent infection from and between employees and consequently comply with the provisions issued by the Federal Council concerning social distancing and hygiene rules.

The pandemic plans contain measures to prevent contagion from and between employees and to maintain a safe and reliable electricity production. The measures include, for example, ‘split operation’ (half of the staff of a department works on site, the other half works from home), ban on holidays for all employees, reducing the number of meetings or maintaining a distance during shift turnover. The measures are primarily aimed to ensure that the minimum number of qualified personnel is maintained, as required by the operating regulations. This applies specially to licensed personnel (e.g. reactor operators), radiation protection personnel and plant security staff. At present, all licensees report that sufficient personnel for safe operations are available.

Very few Covid-19 cases have been reported by the licensees until now.

Maintenance of the NPPs

All annual revisions of the Swiss NPPs have all successfully been completed. Due to the epidemiological situation, the revision programs were reduced, in particular to limit the need for external personnel. This concerned mainly large retrofit projects in Gösgen and Leibstadt NPP.

In individual cases, ENSI approved the extension of intervals in service inspections. No applications were submitted for the postponement of maintenance work.

Outlook

Currently, there is no sign of significant easing of the epidemiological situation. ENSI assumes that the current working regime will have to be maintained until at least next spring.

The Swiss NPPs also assume in their planning that the annual revisions for 2021 will have to be carried out in compliance with the existing corona protection measures.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Hugo Nilsson, Specialist in International Affairs at ENSI (hugo.nilsson@ensi.ch).