



FANR, United States' NNSA conduct radioactive 'orphan' source detection exercise

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ABU DHABI, Feb 09th, 2011 (WAM) -- Experts from several UAE federal security entities that deal with emergency and crisis management have started practicing searching for and securing radioactive activities from what is known as 'orphan sources'.

Wednesday's exercise which was conducted at the Armed Forces Club in Abu Dhabi is part of a 5-day workshop on "Search and Secure Activities for Orphan Radioactive Sources", a training program conducted by the UAE's Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation, or FANR and the US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

John Loy, FANR's director of radiation safety told WAM that the regulatory body will conduct more such exercises which will be more sophisticated, where orphan sources can be found nationwide at construction sites, oil exploration sites.

Participants from the UAE's Critical National Infrastructure Authority (CNIA), Armed Forces Chemical Unit, Civil Defense, the National Emergency Crisis Management Authority (NCEMA) and other federal responding entities tried to find hidden sources with the new highly sensitive equipment they have just learned how to use during classroom sessions. They later tried to identify the source and start to handle it.

The exercise is part of FANR's efforts to protect the public, the workers and the environment in the UAE from radiation hazards, he noted.

The exercise consisted of both classroom lectures and hands-on experience with radiation detection devices. Classroom theoretical training was conducted over the last three days, according to Dr Walid Al Muwafi, Emergency Specialist at FANR.

"Integrated exercises are yet to come in the future and representatives of up to 23 relevant entities will train on handling on radioactive and nuclear accidents," Muwafi said.

"There is also investigations based on data such as serial numbers and the nature and intensity of the radioactivity of detected orphan sources-containers to identify the source which could be in a FANR's inventory list. Foreign entities and manufacturers will then be approached with the data after temporary storage and securing the materials," he added.

One of the key work areas for FANR is to protect the public, the workers and the environment from radiation hazards, Loy said. The workshop is based on FANR's mission to building up expertise and safety in the UAE.

In Wednesday exercise session, participants tried to find hidden sources with the new equipment they have just learned how to use during classroom sessions.

The ultimate goal, according to FANR Radiation Safety Director, John Loy, is to remove excess, unwanted, abandoned, or orphan radioactive sources that pose a potential risk to health, safety and can cause severe burns and even lead to death.

An "orphan source" is a radiation source that -for any reason- has gone out of the regulatory control.

According to the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the term "orphan source" generally refers to a sealed source of radioactive material contained in a small volume--but not radioactively contaminated soils and bulk metals--in certain conditions.

In FANR's exercise, an orphan source would in an uncontrolled condition and requires removal to protect public health and safety from a radiological threat. Another is where the sources is controlled or uncontrolled, but for which a responsible party cannot be readily identified.

Loy added that the exercise aims to address a worldwide problem where orphan sources are in every country. In Eastern Europe, the Soviet Army left behind many such radioactive sources, he noted.

Radioactive sources are used for many industrial and medical applications, such as in digging oil wells or to diagnose and cure cancer, Loy said.

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