



## REPORTING NUCLEAR AND RADIOLOGICAL EVENTS

# THE NEWS COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

In the world of nuclear and radiation safety, **NEWS** stands for **Nuclear Events Web-based System** — an IAEA-supported communication channel on the Internet. NEWS provides authoritative information about nuclear or radiological events as reported to the system by participating national officers worldwide. The aim is to keep the public, as well as nuclear authorities, accurately informed about the occurrence and potential consequences of reported events.

Since 2001, NEWS covers significant events reported at nuclear power plants, research reactors, or nuclear fuel cycle facilities, and reported occurrences involving radiation sources or the transport of radioactive material. More than 60 officers from national nuclear authorities worldwide are authorized to send reports and updates to the system.

Events communicated through NEWS cover a wide spectrum of activities involving nuclear and radiological materials. They include medical and industrial uses of radioisotopes, and radioactive materials transported nationally and internationally. Events are open for viewing for up to six months.

The system is run by the IAEA and co-sponsored by the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/NEA) and the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO). As a communications tool, NEWS is linked to INES, the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale. INES rates nuclear and radiological events according to their safety significance and has designated National Officers for reporting and contact purposes. (See chart.)

### Access to NEWS

NEWS is publicly available at <http://www-news.iaea.org/news/>.

The IAEA hosts and administers the system, but event reports are filed and updated by participating countries, which remain responsible for all related content. More than 60 INES National Officers and their delegates are registered with permission to send and update event information for their country (event descriptions, INES rating, related technical information and press releases) and to view all information.

Official access to NEWS is also given to the OECD/NEA and IAEA Secretariats and the WANO Regional Directors. Experts

from regulatory bodies, operating organizations, and technical support organizations are registered by the officially designated INES National Officer.

Other users, such as journalists or the general public, can read, but not feed or alter, event reports. Accessible information includes event descriptions, INES ratings and press releases. Accredited journalists can register through INES to receive automatic notifications of new reports.

If and when an event occurs, INES National Officers are committed to communicate through the IAEA as quickly as possible official information about it. The information is routed to all participating INES countries, IAEA Member States and international organizations and the media and general public via the NEWS web site.

Which events should be communicated through NEWS depends on their INES rating and global interest. In general, they should include events rated at Level 2 or higher, or events attracting international public interest.

### NEWS Caveats

NEWS is designed to serve as a communications channel, not a safety assessment tool. As such, it would be wrong and misleading to try to compare safety performance among its reporting countries. This is so for various reasons.

For one, arrangements for reporting minor events to the public may differ from country to country. Additionally, it is difficult to ensure precise consistency in rating events at the boundary, that is between INES Level-1 and Below scale/Level-0.

Statistically, the small number of events that are rated at INES Level-2 or higher makes meaningful comparisons difficult. The system also does not provide information on events older than six months.

Also important to keep in mind is that NEWS is not a channel for signalling warnings or triggering response actions in nuclear or radiological emergencies. The IAEA and global partners have other mechanisms in place to coordinate and communicate emergency response actions.



## NEWS Contacts

NEWS is operated by the IAEA, through its Incident and Emergency Centre of the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security. More information is available from the responsible officer at [NEWS.Contact-point@iaea.org](mailto:NEWS.Contact-point@iaea.org), or by visiting the NEWS web site at <http://www-news.iaea.org/news>. The IAEA's mailing address is Wagramer Strasse 5, A-1400 Vienna, Austria.

# INES

## International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale

The International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale — INES for short — is a worldwide tool for communicating to the public in an open and consistent way the safety significance of nuclear and radiological events.

Just like information on earthquakes or temperature would be difficult to understand without the Richter or Celsius scales, INES uses a numerical rating to explain the significance of nuclear or radiological events. INES applies to any event associated with the transport, storage and use of radioactive material and radiation sources. Such events can include industrial and medical uses of radiation sources, operations at nuclear facilities, or the transport of radioactive material.

Events are classified at seven levels: Levels 1–3 are "incidents" and Levels 4–7 "accidents" by considering three areas of impact: people and the environment, radiological barriers and control, and defence-in-depth. The scale is designed so that the severity of an event is about ten times greater for each increase in level on the scale. Events without safety significance are called "deviations" and are classified Below Scale / Level 0.

