



UKRAINE UPDATE: Keeping the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Plant Safe

Description

UKRAINE: The Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant remains intact despite continuing fighting nearby, and UN inspectors are still on site. The [*International Atomic Energy Agency*](#)'s director general, Rafael Mariano Grossi, says:

"This place is at the front line which makes the whole thing so volatile and in need of urgent action."

Before the war, the plant supplied 20% of Ukraine's power. It's now shut down but the reactors need constant cooling with circulating water otherwise they could overheat and quickly cause a nuclear catastrophe. The cooling system relies on electricity coming from the town, and there's shelling. In a conflict zone anything could happen to interrupt the supply.... and probably will.



Rafael Mariano Grossi

Diesel generators are there for emergencies but that arrangement is not secure enough for any length of time.

John Reuwer, chair of the *Zaporizhzhya Protection Project* steering committee, says: “We are grateful for all those working to end the war and challenge those that cause wars.... especially those volunteering for and supporting this project to protect countless people from the potential radiation disaster caused by war. This is the cutting edge of making peace – to take the risks for peace that soldiers take for war.”

Last week saw the first training of volunteers with 35 participating. They learned about the specifics of the project, the nature of the Zaporizhzhya plant, the dangers it faces, and the threat it poses. They were also introduced to the workings of Unarmed Civilian Protection.

A second training session is scheduled for January. Reuwer announced that the effort had grown in numbers and capacity beyond being a proposal and was now a full-blown project “the purpose of which is to form the Zaporizhzhya Protection Team willing to be boots on the ground for the protection of people from a radiation catastrophe”.



The ZNPP, which was built between 1984 and 1995, is the largest in Europe and is among the world’s 10 largest nuclear power plants. Located in southeastern Ukraine near the city of Enerhodar, the plant generates 20% of Ukraine’s electricity.

The six reactors, each of which has a net capacity of 950 megawatts, can supply energy to nearly 4 million households with a total electricity production of 5,700 megawatts.

Contact has been established with the *International Atomic Energy Agency* who say that for the

moment their inspectors have adequate support from the *United Nations* but want the ZPP team to keep in touch. "What this means," says Reuwer, "is that we do not yet have the mandate to be on the ground at the plant. Most of us agree, however, that we should continue training as if we did so that when the opportunity arises we will be prepared to move quickly.



In the meantime, he appeals for more volunteers, continued moral support, and pledges of money for hiring trainers for the more technical aspects.

by Stuart Littlewood

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