

NIVI Report 2011:4

Media's view of the NRPA's information function following the events in Fukushima

Prepared on behalf of the Norwegian Radiation Protection Agency (NRPA)

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Preface

This report contains results from an external user survey about the NRPA's information activities in connection with the events in Fukushima in the days after March 11th 2011. Personal interviews were conducted with 20 journalists from various media who had all had close contact with the NRPA in this period. The interviewees are divided into seven different media segments, including TV, radio, news agencies, web editors, scientific press and national and regional newspapers.

The project was conducted in close collaboration with Anne Marit Østreng, Information Director and Synne Margrethe Egset, adviser at the NRPA. Geir Vinsand was the consultant from NIVI Analysis. Magne Langset participated as a discussion partner and quality assurer.

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1 Main Points

Very good information management by the NRPA

The survey obtained good feedback from the press and the media, indicating that the NRPA has succeeded very well with information management related to Fukushima. Earlier media surveys have shown that the NRPA has a positive and strong profile as an information provider in a normal situation. The present study suggests that this positive profile is maintained, and at key points improved, during the handling of the serious events in Japan. NRPA comes out with the same good availability as in a normal situation, the same positive service feedback and the same high total score on the evaluation of collective information practices. NRPA received better feedback about openness and the ability to provide understandable information than in a normal situation.

Large demand from the media

The events in Japan led to a very high demand from the media, collaboration partners and the public. During the first 10 days after March 11th, 65 appearances in television and radio by employees in the NRPA were registered. In the same period there were at least 800 media enquiries by telephone, 150-200 telephone calls from the public via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, in addition, a number of e-mail enquiries direct to the NRPA. The information efforts were led by the information unit in the NRPA who normally have three employees but who were supported by a further four people. The management of NRPA and other experts were used as press spokespeople. The survey documented that the NRPA had extensive contacts with the press and media during the period.

Good access to press spokespeople

In the survey, 17 of 20 interviewees answered that they consider the availability of NRPA to be very good or good during the period. It was emphasised as particularly important that the NRPA mobilised many experts as press spokespeople during the most hectic phase. In the survey, a minority of 7 out of 20 reported that it seemed that they were unable to contact the NRPA for follow up at the right time or by the right person. Only three interviewees were understood to be critical of the NRPA's conduct which can be explained by too little capacity and irregular access to the press contacts in the initial phase. In light of the large number of enquiries, these must be regarded as very positive numbers.

Updated news on the website

A majority of 13 out of 20 respondents said that they found what they needed for their work on the NRPA website. They said that the site contained the right amount of information, that the content was precise and that it was updated as expected. The minority requested more photos and graphics, better content prioritisation on the website and more information about the risk of pollution and health effects.

Differing views on use of press releases

When reporting news from the NRPA it was decided not to give out press releases in connection with the incident. A majority of 13 of 20 respondents believe this was the right decision. The minority thought that the NRPA should have given out press releases in the initial phase. The interviewees' backgrounds suggest that the press releases are especially important for news agencies, regional newspapers, scientific press organs and other minor editorial offices outside the most central media.

NRPA should have been on Twitter

There are many strong yet differing opinions about whether the NRPA should have been on Facebook and Twitter. 14 of 20 respondents answered yes to the question, and most emphasised Twitter as more important than Facebook for the type of event that happened in Japan. Many consider the use of social media as very important if there was a similar event with major consequences for the population in Norway.

Positive feedback from online web meetings

Experience with NRPA's participation in online web meetings is considered to be very good by the interviewees from the relevant editorial offices. This applies both in relation to practicalities, user response and performance of the experts in the NRPA. One of the editors said that the online web meeting was the largest that was ever held, with over 3,000 submitted questions. It was acknowledged that the participants from the NRPA were knowledgeable and filled the role of experts in a good way.

Clear message in Norway

A large majority of 17 out of 20 respondents believe that the NRPA stood with a clear message about the incident and any consequences for Norway. A third of the interviewees said that the situation in Japan was different and more marked by conflicting information from different sources. In retrospect, more concrete proposals for what could have been informed better by NRPA have emerged. This is about supplementary information and does not change that the survey confirms that the NRPA stood with a clear message to the press and media in Norway.

Clear and good source

18 out of 20 respondents reported that information from the NRPA was mainly understandable and well prepared. It is emphasised that the NRPA used good language in their written submissions and were able to communicate a difficult subject to the general public. Good availability of skilled staff is considered to be very important in order to avoid interpretation problems. All respondents indicated that the NRPA followed the case closely and that the information was essentially well adapted to the development of the case over time.

Good practice of openness

NRPA got very good feedback on the practice of openness. Almost all respondents believe the NRPA exhibited sufficient transparency in relation to the press and media. The impression of openness is significantly better compared with the feedback in a normal situation.

Good service mindedness

Also feedback about the service mindedness is generally positive. 18 out of 20 respondents believe the NRPA was sufficiently attentive and helpful. This is the same high level as measured in previous media research.

Positive overall impression

Three-quarters of the interviewees believed that the NRPA demonstrated a good or very good information practice during the period. Several people said that the NRPA gave impressively good information and the whole scenario was characterised by the fact that the authority had a well thought-out and good information strategy. Others called for better coordination of information flow and a better capacity to follow up enquiries. From some, the use of press releases was requested with more active participation in social media and more practical adaptation for television production.

Proposed measures

From many interviewees, it is said that the most important thing the NRPA can do is to continue its good practice and retain all the talented professionals who have done a good job. Otherwise a number of suggestions for improvements emerged, of which some of the most important would be to make a plan for dealing with a similar event with direct consequences in Norway.

2 Goals, problem approach and methodology

2.1 Objectives and survey background

The aim of this media survey has been to map users' experiences of NRPA information practices related to a specific incident at the nuclear power plant Fukushima Dai-ichi Japan. The starting point was an earthquake off the east coast of Japan on March 11th with a subsequent tsunami which primarily resulted in the loss of lives and considerable material damage. A total of five nuclear power plants with 15 reactors along the coast were closed down. In one of the plants (Onagawa) a fire arose that was quickly extinguished and the situation was brought under control. The Fukushima Dai-ichi plant encountered problems with multiple security systems including the external power supply and emergency power that resulted in problems with the cooling of the reactor cores. On March 12th an explosion was reported at the plant and then a series of events occurred that resulted in moderate emissions of radioactive substances. The incident involved the risk of a major emission with potentially dire consequences that required a separate contingency plan.

The survey focuses on NRPA's response to the crisis situation in Japan. The primary attention was given to the safety of Norwegian citizens in Japan, including on-site management and ongoing professional advice to, among others, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Emissions from Fukushima Dai-ichi could be measured in Norway, thanks to advanced equipment, but the values were so low that there was no impact on health and the environment.

The Crisis Committee for Nuclear Preparedness gathered on March 12th and held five further meetings before a summary meeting on May 2nd. The amount of communication work was particularly large in the first two weeks after March 11th. The influx was great from the media, partners and the public. During the first ten days, 65 appearances were recorded in television and radio involving employees in the NRPA. In the same period there were at least 800 media enquiries by phone, 150-200 phone calls from the public via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in addition a number of direct e-mail enquiries to the NRPA.

The communication efforts were led by the information unit in the NRPA, which normally has three employees. This was reinforced by two other employees in the NRPA to assist with press and media relations, online news and media surveillance. In addition, help was requested from the Crisis Committee's information group, where two additional external people were involved in the work. The unit's assignments were thus taken care of by seven people in the most hectic period. The management of NRPA and other scientific experts were used as press spokespeople.

In the first week, two press briefings were organised by the NRPA in conjunction with the Crisis Committee's meetings. Enquiries from the press and media were continuously handled, with the arrangement of interviews and the provision of various types of background content of a scientific nature. During the four weeks after the incident, approximately 30 news reports and updates were posted on the NRPA website. Press releases were not issued during the period. One of the communication activities that can be mentioned involved experts from the NRPA participating in six online meetings to answer questions under the direction of TV2, NRK, Aftenposten and VG (national media).

“Users” in this survey refers to journalists and reporters in all the important editorial offices who continuously received information from the NRPA. The purpose of this survey was to obtain feedback on established communication channels and NRPA's role with regards to the press and media.

2.2 Problem approach

The survey was conducted based on an interview guide with the following themes:

- Contact patterns to the NRPA
- Availability of press contacts and press spokespeople
- Use of NRPA website
- Evaluation of channel selection for information dissemination
- Experience with NRPA's participation in online meetings
- Evaluation of key messages and the degree of compliance in relation to information from other operators
- Evaluation of information practices, including information intelligibility, amount of information, degree of transparency and impression of service-mindedness
- Overall evaluation of information management and views about areas for improvement

The interview guide was designed with the aim of qualitative data collection without the use of fixed-scale questions and was developed in collaboration with the client. The complete interview guide is appended to this report.

2.3 Methodological approach and data foundation

The target group was defined from the information unit's editorial list with an overview of editorial offices and people who were in contact with the NRPA in the relevant period. The list contained approximately 45 editorial offices and 120 named individuals. The list was further reviewed to identify the key editorial offices and journalists who have been in contact with the NRPA several times. It was agreed that the national media and newsrooms where NRPA had participated in online meetings should be given priority. In addition, it was considered important to follow up the largest news agencies and the relevant scientific press.

In the interviews, NIVI sought named individuals. In newsrooms with multiple contacts, we searched for the person on the editorial board who had most contact with NRPA in the period. The recruitment of interviewees was demanding in some cases, mostly due to practical reasons, but in some cases also from the fundamental reason that the journalists did not want to answer this type of research. After follow-up interviews with editors and written briefings on the background and purpose of the survey, interviews were organised with all the major newsrooms as intended.

A total of 20 telephone interviews were arranged by the responsible consultant. These can all be considered as frequent users of NRPA information activities in connection with the events in Japan. The interviewees are often people who have either politics or social, environmental or health as a speciality. Many have been working on NRPA issues for a long time and several have very good knowledge of the NRPA. The respondents are distributed among different types of editors as follows: TV (4), radio (2), national newspapers (3), the regional newspapers (2), online newsrooms (5), news (2) and the scientific press (2). The committee found examples of journalists who have made cases for multiple media platforms, e.g. both online and printed newspapers or both TV and radio.

The interviews were conducted by telephone between May 12-27th 2011. In the presentation of the survey, the respondents were informed that the responses from the individual would be treated anonymously in relation to the client.

An external consultant has been in contact with approximately 35 different editorial office for the purpose of tracking the interviewees. Except for time-consuming recruitment, the experiences gained from interviews were very good. Several of the 20 respondents have taken their time and given thorough feedback, often referring to their belief that it is both laudable and important that the NRPA takes the time for this type of research.

3 Contact patterns and availability

3.1 Contact Pattern

To map the contact patterns the following question was posed: *In which context were you in contact with the NRPA from March 11th onwards?* The respondents were followed up with questions about if they had been in contact with press contacts / anyone in management, other experts, if they had been to NRPA, conducted interviews in the studio or otherwise participated in connection with online meetings, sought information on the website or another type of contact.

All respondents confirmed contact with the press contacts and press spokespeople and the use of the website in their work. Several said that it was difficult to remember specifically who they had been in contact with, other than the director and two or three other key people. Often contact with multiple people was referred to depending on the case's approach and it was repeatedly pointed out that it is very important that NRPA has available expertise in various fields.

Use of the website is confirmed as a main source for all interviewees, with reference to the current news and updates, but also other information on the website.

A majority of 14 out of 20 respondents said they had conducted interviews in the studio or in another way, while significantly fewer confirmed a visit to the NRPA (4) and involvement in online meetings (2). It is perhaps a little surprising that not more of the sample confirmed the interview participation and visits to the NRPA in connection with the two press conferences. This may be related to different forms of work and that there were often many involved in the coverage of the case from the same editorial. A central national newspaper reported that the editors had 40 people who were continuously working on the case in the most hectic phase. Participation in online meetings was limited to four editors; two key people who were directly involved in implementation are among the interviewees.

The interviewees' contact pattern reflects the NRPA had extensive contact with the press and media in the current period.

3.2 Evaluation of availability

To determine availability, the following question was posed: "*How would you assess the availability of NRPA in the period?*" The question was asked openly for the purpose of follow-up questions for further explanation. In retrospect, the answers were grouped in three categories (very good / good, moderately good and less good / bad).

Considering the seriousness of the case and the very large influx of information, the answers are considered to be very positive:

- 17 of 20 respondents said that availability of NRPA was very good or good in the period
- 2 respondents said moderately good
- 1 respondent believed the availability was less good or bad

The good availability of the NRPA in such a stressful situation appears to be one of the main findings of the survey. In earlier media surveys, conducted in a normal situation, up to 90 percent responded that they consider the availability of NRPA as good. Although high availability in a normal situation should provide a good basis to tackle the availability requirement in a crisis-like situation, it is not obvious that we can successfully continue such a practice.

In the interviews, a number of explanations were given for why availability was rated as good. It was pointed out that there were skilled and flexible individuals who were available virtually around the clock. It was highlighted as very important that the NRPA mobilised many press spokespeople with scientific knowledge in various areas. It was emphasised that good accessibility is the ability to coordinate messages while communicating the same message through multiple channels. Finally, it was noted that good access also requires the ability to organise and manage all the requests.

A small excerpt of the statements from the 17 with a positive impression:

- *In short, fantastic, 100 percent very good, even early on Sunday, they are a directorate*
- *Brilliant, I noticed that they recruited experts that we could ask*
- *Very good from a few hours into the situation, it took some time before the boss was in place*
- *Availability was good except for the first phase where there were some days that were impossible*
- *They had a lady who did a very good job on TV*
- *I got surprisingly good help; they read through the article and helped with quality assurance*
- *They took into account that I had an early deadline; they rang me and gave quick answers*
- *When both the director and experts are so accessible and they continuously put out good information on the website, much is done*
- *The availability was good and it should be, after all it was very important*

From the response distribution, the positive feedback comes from all kinds of editors, both TV, radio, newspapers, news agencies, online newsrooms and the scientific press.

The interviewees who thought availability was moderately good or bad come from an online newsroom, a television news editor and a news agency. The reasons related to the availability were perceived as variable and directly bad in the most hectic phase. One of the interviewees pointed out that the director should have been available from the start and thought that the start was a bit too much influenced by improvisation rather than contingency planning. It was said that the practical arrangements for the TV could have been better. In another case, it was stressed that it took too long before the expected information was put on the website.

3.3 Negative experiences

The issue of availability was followed up with the following question: “*Did you not make contact with someone in the NRPA or did you not achieve what you should have done?*” For this question seven interviewees answered affirmative, while 13 denied that this had happened. Also, these responses must be regarded as positive, in light of the large influx. Among the seven, all types of media are represented. Four of the interviewees emphasise that the lack of follow-up was related to the director not being available, contact was not made in the most hectic phase or that citations were not checked in time. It was emphasised that this was understandable given the situation.

Three interviewees were interpreted as having a poor response from NRPA. The criticism was that the press spokespeople were not available and that the handling was characterised by the NRPA not having the necessary capacity in the initial phase.

These responses are in line with the numbers in the general media survey in 2009, where 12 percent reported that they had failed to make contact to get the necessary follow-up.

4 Citations and channel selection

4.1 Use of website

All respondents were asked whether they had used the NRPA website in their work and followed up with this question: *Did you find what you needed in your work, or was there something you missed?*

All said they had used the website and the answer distribution of the follow-up question was as follows:

- 13 interviewees indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the information on the website
- 7 interviewees indicated that they lacked information or had other views about the web site

Those who were satisfied pointed out that the website contained the right amount of information and that this was accurate and was updated as expected. Among the seven respondents who lacked information we find all types of media represented, except radio. From these, an archive with photos from the event and the relevant plants were missed, as well as photos of everything from measuring equipment to the situation room. There were also many who missed pictures of the press spokespeople who are not included among the regular press contacts.

It was also said that it could be difficult to search on the website and content prioritisation could have been better. Regarding content prioritisation, there was a request for "this is the case," "this is happening now", "this is the important question", referring to the fact that the website contained a large amount of relevant, but not as important information. One interviewee said that the contact information for one of the spokespeople was not updated.

An interviewee from a TV newsroom requested more information about the risk of pollution and potential health effects on the website.

4.2 Channel selection for information dissemination

All interviewees were asked the following three questions relating to channel selection:

- *NRPA prioritised posting news on the website and direct contact with the press and media. Did you miss press releases in your work?*
- *Do you think the NRPA should have been on Facebook and Twitter? What are the benefits and possible objections to the use of social media in this context?*
- *What is your experience with NRPA's participation in online meetings?*

To the first question, seven interviewees responded that NRPA should have sent out press releases, while 13 interviewees said this was not necessary. Among the seven, we find interviewees from a news agency, a regional newspaper, two scientific press organs, a radio station, and two web editors. The main view from these was that press releases could have been used in the initial phase in which it was important to create awareness and control information about a particular news story. It was also emphasised that press releases sent out by e-mail to all editors will reach a larger audience and contribute to the updating of editors who do not follow online news so closely. The interviewees' backgrounds suggest that press releases can be especially important for news agencies, regional newspapers, scientific press organs and other minor editorial offices outside the central media.

On the issue of whether NRPA should have been on Facebook and Twitter, some strong opinions emerged in several directions. 14 of 20 respondents answered yes to the question, three stated that they were not users of social media at work. Most who responded affirmatively stated that it would be more relevant to be on Twitter, which is more geared towards those who follow the NRPA, than on Facebook which is aimed towards the public. The remaining six respondents answered no to the question.

The reasons why the NRPA should have been active ranged from views that "*everything else is stone age*" or more detailed views that "*we sit up with Twitter Programs and follow continuously. In this way we find important news and we know that social media are*

important channels of information, particularly in relation to the young. For us it is easier to follow on Twitter than on the website. I see no other objection than that it requires a certain expertise and capacity at the NRPA." Another interviewee pointed out that many other governments eventually adopt social media. *"Even the PST (= the Norwegian Police Security Service) is on Facebook."*

From others it was said that social media should be used to quickly get out important issues and opinions to a wide audience. *"The problem is too much information and someone has to sort it. You may not use social media to maintain the standard information, it is typical for large changes or when there is a need for correction and sorting that they should go out."*

Several also mentioned that the use of social media can be a relief compared to the use of other information channels. Some of those who gave support to the use of social media thought that this assumes that the NRPA has the necessary capacity. *"The prioritisation of social media must not go beyond the activity on the website and the ability to make direct contact."*

Among those who were negative or sceptical, views appeared that *"in this area, I'm conservative," "social media appears to be an unedited and not very clear channel", "I see it as unnatural for a public authority such as NRPA to prioritise these channels" "they should give priority to the safe and important channels" and "I do not need it because the NRPA had good access to the media that informed people"*.

An initially sceptical interviewee said that the situation would be different if the NRPA had to control public behaviour in a crisis situation at home. In such a situation the interviewee thought that Facebook would be a timely and important information channel.

When it comes to online meetings, information is available from two interviewees who were directly involved. In addition, there were additional reviews from two other interviewees in the appropriate editorial offices. The feedback indicates a very good experience with online meetings. This applies both in relation to practicalities, user response and the performance of experts in NRPA. From one of the editors, it was said that the online meeting was the largest that was ever held, with over 3,000 submitted questions. Several pointed out that the case was particularly suitable because it was serious, while the need for information and expert reviews were great. It was expressed that the participants from the NRPA were knowledgeable and filled the role of experts in a good way.

5 Messages and conformity of information

5.1 Evaluation of the main messages

The following questions were asked: *Looking back, do you think the NRPA emerged with a clear message in light of the incident, or was there information you missed from the NRPA?*

The question is in two-parts and when the answers are processed the answers are split between the first part (clear message) and the second part (request for additional information).

NRPA had four main messages:

- The situation was serious and unresolved
- The emissions were detectable in measurements in Norway
- No impact on health or the environment, no need for action in Norway
- Focus on safety for Norwegian citizens in Japan

On the issue of whether the NRPA emerged with a clear message, 17 were confirmatory, one disagreed (news agency), while two responded in varying degrees (web editors).

In the explanation that the message was perceived as clear, many said that it applied to Norway and not Japan, where many thought there was conflicting information from different sources. It was said that the NRPA had a "*scientifically grounded and clear message*," that "*they were concerned with the facts*", that "*they were accurate and cautious*" and that "*they maintained a clear message, even if they repeated themselves ad nauseam*".

From the interviewee who believed that the message was not clear, it was said that NRPA was quickly dismissive in its assessment of possible consequences for Norway. In this context it was said that "*they may be a little hasty*" and specifically referred to a case where the NRPA rejected the need for testing of goods from Japan, which the Food Safety Authority introduced shortly after.

The two interviewees who believed that the message varied emphasised that this was partly because it took a few days before the NRPA emerged with a clear message and partly because the NRPA could have been quicker and more active in efforts to allay fears of pollution and health effects in Norway.

On the part of the question that asked whether the respondents lacked information, affirmative answers were given from nine interviewees. They called for more or better information about the following:

- Use of international risk scale, where it was said that such information may be obtained from the International Atomic Energy Agency
- more factual content about the types of reactors and pollution hazards associated with different technical solutions
- more factual content about the possible health effects of small doses
- More pictures and more graphical representations of important contexts
- Facilitation of information from government agencies and research institutions in Japan

Further, one interviewee said that "the NRPA is cocooned in a technical language. They must dare to be banal to reach people without becoming tabloid."

It can be concluded that a large majority of respondents perceive that the NRPA emerged with a clear message to the press and media in Norway. The survey found only one clear exception to this as well as two interviewees who believed that the message varied in content over time, emphasising that the message was less clear in the initial phase. In retrospect, more concrete proposals appear for what could have been informed more and better. These are supplementary comments and do not change that the survey suggests that the NRPA has succeeded in communicating a clear message to the press and media.

5.2 Consistency of information from different sources

The following questions were asked: *Was there consistency between the information conveyed by the NRPA and information from other operators? I'm thinking of other Norwegian authorities like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international sources.*

On this question, 13 responded affirmatively, while seven said they had experienced an inconsistency in the information from various sources. From respondents who answered affirmatively, it was said that the Crisis Committee and the management of NRPA provided

coordinated information in a good way. Several also felt that they had learned that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs used the NRPA actively and between these operators there was a good consistency of information to the public.

From interviewees who were of another opinion, most said that Norwegian citizens in Japan were subjected to very conflicting information from various national and international sources. It was reflected in the discussions about moving the embassy, where it was said that *"the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that the embassy should be moved while the NRPA communicated that there was not a serious situation in Tokyo."* It was said that different countries gave different advice to their citizens and that this contributed to the situation in Japan being significantly different from the situation in Norway. Most of the observed inconsistency in the information management in Japan conveyed that there is no criticism of the NRPA for the situation turning out the way it did. *"NRPA was one among many operators, they had a heavy responsibility and they had to act under uncertainty."*

From a couple of interviewees, it was said that "risk assessments at home depended on who you talked to and what sources they chose to use". It was in this context said that NRPA and IFE (= Institute for Energy Technology) have different expertise in reactor technology and risk assessments could be different depending on who you asked. It was on this basis, they said that there may be a need for better coordination of messages between NRPA and IFE.

6 Evaluation of information practices

6.1 Problem approaches

An important part of the survey was about getting feedback on NRPA's information practices. The information practices meant the ability to provide comprehensive and reliable information, adjust the quantity of information, be transparent and of course to give good service in contact with journalists. The answers to these questions are presented below.

6.2 Comprehension

The following questions were asked: *Was the information from the NRPA difficult to understand or interpret, or was there no problem?*

On this question, 18 of 20 interviewees said that the information was mainly understandable and well-prepared. It was explained that many interviewees has extensive experience in communicating radiation protection issues and had good knowledge of NRPA for many years. It was emphasised that the NRPA used good language in the written communications and they can present difficult topics for the general public. It was also emphasised that the interpretation of the information was made easier by the availability of management and experts and that the institution is characterised as having a good service attitude. This was expressed through statements such as *"they were serious, a clear and good source"* and *"I got surprisingly good help."*

In the interviews, it was also said that NRPA has several competent individuals who mastered different roles in relation to the media. In this context, specific people were referred to in both management and among the experts. Many interviewees, particularly from TV explained that it can be difficult to be in the studio and that *"we had a very talented lady."*

Finally there were those who believed that it is not only NRPA's responsibility to provide information in an understandable manner, but they also have a responsibility to communicate and structure various types of information in an easily understandable way. Some took on considerable responsibility by claiming that *"it is our responsibility to explain"*, while others

stated that the NRPA was well balanced between information from the "nuclear physicists with a free rein" and serious authority information.

The two interviewees who believed that the information could be difficult to understand, both came from newspapers, a national newspaper and a regional newspaper. In one case it was said that "*I don't know nuclear physics, I had to push to get the explanations and I think they could have done more to avoid a difficult technical language.*" In the second case, more support information on the website was requested in the form of a definition list and a glossary that is tailored to the issues that characterise the news.

There were also several interviewees who mentioned that the NRPA is "*not very graphics heavy*" and that more can be done to adapt illustrations and photos that will always be needed.

6.3 Information quantity

The question was: *Do you have the impression that the NRPA gave sufficient information?* In the interviews it was emphasised that we were concerned about the quantity and dosage of the different phases in relation to the case's development.

On this question all the interviewees indicated that the NRPA followed the case closely and that the information was essentially well adapted to the case over time. It was said that "*they were there in all phases*" and that "*they did what they could do.*" It was sometimes pointed out that "*yes, it was sufficient, but there is never enough information in such a situation.*"

Furthermore, there were some, emphasising that they saw the case in retrospect, that it ended well without speculation about NRPA's role. "*The matter died out, it is downplayed and they succeeded.*"

Also here several pointed out improvement areas, especially in light that over a sufficiently long period of time a lot of different information was posted on the website. Several people said more could have been done to avoid hiding the crux of the case and the status in several layers of information, where it could be difficult to navigate. Better information prioritisation on the website and better coordination of information to key editors were mentioned as relevant areas for improvement. Coordinating the flow of information was highlighted as particularly important in relation to TV and radio.

6.4 Openness

The question was: *Do you think the NRPA exhibited sufficient transparency in relation to the press and media?*

19 answered yes and one "do not know" to this question. It must be regarded as a very positive result. In earlier media surveys, where approximately the same audience evaluated NRPA's transparency in a normal situation, the same positive number did not emerge. In 2006, 85 per cent were affirmative, compared with 66 per cent in 2009. The main reason for lower numbers in previous studies was particularly connected to the focus on alternative expert viewpoints on radiation risks in everyday life.

It is therefore a little surprising that the NRPA almost invariably get positive feedback on the practice of openness. Many justified their impressions with good access and active involvement in the issues and questions that were posed by journalists. In one case comparisons were made in terms of experience with other institutions: "*It was simply amazing, they were available with many press spokespeople, they were quick, they set up an answering service, frequently released news and they acted more professional than other government agencies. Bellona is committed to setting the agenda and they like to express their*

views. *NRPA is neutral and they are scientific.*" In the interviews, there were also very few who were concerned with Bellona, except for some that stated that *"Bellona was also balanced and contributed to good public information."*

In some cases, the assessment of transparency was conditional: *"Yes, I cannot say anything else, but it only applies in this case and Sellafield."* Something similar was expressed by *"yes I have good feelings in this matter, but it is something they have to prove every time,"* referring to the fact that reporters at the outset will be critical to the authorities.

In one case, the answer was affirmative, but added that NRPA does not have the best apparatus for handling access requests. It was stated that it may take 2-3 days and the NRPA should link into the same electronic solution that several other directorates have (joint public postal records).

6.5 Service-mindedness

The question was: *What about service-mindedness, were they sufficiently attentive and helpful?*

Also here the feedback is extremely positive: 18 answered good or very good, 2 answered mixed or poor. From those who had a positive impression, a number of interesting responses emerged that *"they met service requirements, I was always informed, and they had a good attitude."* Many emphasised the good availability, and several indicated that they felt they were given priority, including by the Director. In discussions, several examples of active follow-up were pointed out, not only in the academic context, but also the far more important question: *"I was starving, we were near the cafeteria, they understood and I got food."*

From the two that were critical, their experiences were of poor availability and the need to beg for attention, which was interpreted as an expression that the NRPA had insufficient capacity to handle the influx. In one case, it was also said that there were acts of discrimination in access to the situation room to take pictures at one of the press conferences. *"They prioritised the evening news and TV2, and I could not take pictures."* It was said that this was maybe not intentional due to the crowd, but it was still perceived as an unacceptable discrimination against the journalist.

The consistently good feedback about the service-mindedness is completely in line with findings in previous media surveys. NRPA has once again emerged with a positive service profile with only a few exceptions from users with other experiences.

7 Overall evaluation and proposed measures

7.1 Overall evaluation of information practices

To get an overall evaluation, the following question was asked: *How satisfied are you overall with NRPA's information practices? I use a scale from 1-3 where 1 is best and 3 is worst.* In interviews it was not always appropriate to use a scale. In the numerical summary therefore, discretion is used to position interviewees based on information given in the interview.

For this question, 15 interviewees gave the best grade, 4 gave a two and one gave a three. There is thus a large majority of 75 per cent of respondents who believe the NRPA has demonstrated good or very good information practices. It must be regarded as a good result in a challenging situation with a critical audience. In the media survey in 2009 there was a narrow majority of 53 per cent who gave the highest grade, about one third gave the middle

score, while only one interviewee was little satisfied or dissatisfied with the NRPA information practices. The figures suggest that NRPA did better during a challenging situation than in a normal situation.

As examples of good information practices, a number of positive aspects are highlighted that are described earlier in this report. Good access to management and experts, and active use of the website is highlighted as particularly important. A good service attitude is also highlighted, not least that the NRPA gave reliable scientific assessments and had a trustworthy practice in terms of transparency. Several people said that the NRPA gave impressively good information and the whole scenario was characterised by the fact that the agency had a considered and good information strategy.

Among the four who gave a two, we find interviewees from a TV newsroom, a news agency, a web editor and an interviewee from the scientific press. TV editors called for better coordination of information flow and messages from various operators, and to improve practical arrangements for TV production. The news agency said that the NRPA had too little capacity, which impacted availability and the ability to obtain necessary follow-up. It requested press releases and argued that this would have relieved the work situation and saved the NRPA from too many enquiries. The scientific press organ called for better prioritisation of information on the website and better preparation of background content, including pictures and graphics. It also requested the use of press releases and participation in social media. The web editor was also concerned with the same type of improvements on the website and also believed that the NRPA should have used press releases and participated in social media. The most critical interviewee, who gave a three, came from a TV newsroom. The person said that the NRPA had little capacity to follow up enquiries and that the arrangements for the TV production were not the best. It was said that *"they should have had twice the capacity for information handling"* and expressed concern that if something similar could happen in Norway *"they must have a strategy that if something similar should happen with direct consequences for Norway, then the existing plan would not have worked."*

7.2 Proposed measures

A final question was: *Do you have any suggestions for what the NRPA can do to improve the information handling for this type of event?* The question was put openly to all interviewees. Many people said that the most important thing NRPA can do is to continue its good practice and retain all the talented experts who have done a good job.

Otherwise, a number of suggestions emerged; the most important were as follows:

- NRPA should evaluate whether the capacity was sufficient and plan for a similar event in Norway
- NRPA should coordinate the message from experts in NRPA and experts from IFE who comment about the extent of the crisis and possible consequences
- NRPA should increasingly provide information from international sources
- NRPA should prepare better for TV production in-house
- NRPA should be more multi-media, they should use Twitter and consider using Facebook
- NRPA should have a greater capacity to participate in online meetings
- NRPA should consider prioritising of content and editing of the website as the case progresses
- Measures should be implemented to ensure simpler and more educational information, including a picture archive and graphic illustrations
- More background information about the pollution hazards and possible health effects should be organised.

- NRPA should consider the use of press releases to create awareness and free up resources for inevitable enquiries.

Interview Guide Fukushima 2011

Recruitment

Media Company: _____ Phone _____

Contact person / position: _____

Called: _____ - _____

Appointment: _____

Date of interview: _____ Reason for not taking part: _____

Introduction and background information

Introduction: I'm calling from NIVI analysis and I'm working on behalf of the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority. I have some questions about your experience with the media handling of the NRPA in connection with the incident in Fukushima / Japan. The questions are about the availability and preparation for press and media. The aim of the NRPA is to get feedback on their practices as the basis for developing a better information function. All the interviews are anonymous.

Time period: From when the incident was reported in Norway on March 11th to a couple of weeks later

01. Media Segment

- 1: TV
- 2: Radio
- 3: National newspaper
- 4: Web Editors
- 5: News agency
- 6: Regional newspaper
- 7: Scientific press

02. Catchment

- 1: National media
- 2: Regional media

03. What is your main field of activity?

04. How have you been involved with the coverage of Fukushima / Japan?

What have you written cases about, how often, etc.

Contact pattern to NRPA

1. In what context were you in contact with the NRPA? (From 11.03 onwards)

- Press Contacts
- Other professionals in the NRPA
- Been at NRPA
- Interview in the studio or otherwise
- Web Meeting
- Sought information on internet / website
- Other

Availability

IF CONTACT

2. How do you assess the availability of the NRPA in the period?

Good, Average, Poor

Follow up in terms of press contacts and experts

ALL

3. Did you not contact the NRPA, or did you not achieve what you planned? When, with whom

Use of website

4. Did you use the NRPA website at work?

Did you find what you needed in your work, or was something missing?

Channel Choice

5. NRPA prioritised posting news on the website and direct contact with the press and media.

Did you miss the press releases from the NRPA in your work?

6. Do you think the NRPA should have been on Facebook and Twitter? Follow up, what is the benefit, or objections

If online meeting (TV2, NRK, Aftenposten, VG)

7. What is your experience with NRPA's participation in the online meetings? Follow up, did it work, why important, good response

Message

8. Looking back, did NRPA emerge with a clear message after the incident, or was information lacking?

NRPA had four basic messages:

- That the situation was serious and unresolved
- That the emissions would be measurable in Norway
- No impact on health or the environment, no need for action
- Focus on safety of Norwegian citizens in Japan

Co-ordination

9. Was there consistency between the information conveyed by NRPA and other operators?

I'm thinking of other Norwegian authorities such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international sources

Understandability

10. Was the information from the NRPA difficult to understand or interpret, or was there no problem?

Amount of information

11. Do you have the impression that the NRPA gave enough information?

Openness

12. Do you think the NRPA exhibited sufficient transparency in relation to the press and media?

Service

13. What about service, were they sufficiently attentive and helpful?

Overall assessment and measures

14. How satisfied are you with NRPA information practices overall? Present scale 1-3

15. Finally: Do you have suggestions for what the NRPA can do to improve the information function for this type of event?