

Title	The tolerability of risk from nuclear power stations	
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Executive Summary	<p>This document originates in a recommendation by Sir Frank Layfield, in his report of the Sizewell B Public inquiry (1 986) that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) should 'formulate and publish guidelines on the tolerable levels of individual and social risk to workers and the public from nuclear power stations.' He said 'the opinion of the public should underlie the evaluation of risk; there is at present insufficient public information to allow understanding of the basis for the regulation of nuclear safety.' He recommended 'that as a first step, HSE should publish a document on the basis of which public, expert and Parliamentary opinion could be expressed.'</p> <p>This attitude to industrial risk and in particular the use of the word 'tolerable' was new. Until that time, discussion of the extent of the risks, to people or to the environment from industrial undertakings tended to be regarded as a matter for experts. Many experts believed, and some still believe, that the quantification of risks is too uncertain and too difficult a matter for people generally to grasp. Others openly said, and some still do, that most ordinary people only wish to believe that there is no risk at all from such undertakings, are probably not interested in finding out what exactly the risks are, and that to carry on a public discussion on the subject simply provokes objections to things that people are not in reality bothered about.</p> <p>But in fact many people are bothered about nuclear power and other industrial risks and have become more so during the years since Sir Frank Layfield wrote his report'. The Health and Safety Commission and Executive believe that the public ought to have available to them an accurate account of important industrial risks and how they are controlled. In response therefore to Sir Frank Layfield's recommendation, HSE produced the first version of this document (the Tolerability document) in February 1988, comparing the extent of the nuclear risks with other risks and stating what measures and standards are applied to their reduction.</p> <p>The Commission invited public comment on the document, and published all the comments received in November 1988, stating their intention to review the document and possibly to republish it in some updated form, taking account of comment.</p> <p>Subsequently, the document received a close public examination at the inquiry by Mr. Michael Barnes QC into the application to build a new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point2. As a result the inquiry Report made a number of observations as to the standards to be applied to a station to be built at Hinkley. By and large, the report accepted the document as a clear and accurate exposition of the risks, and of the standards applied by HSE through its Nuclear Installations inspectorate (NII).</p>	
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