

## Public Communication Strategy Development: Focused on the Public Opinion Poll and Lessons Learned from the Survey on Nuclear Safety

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### 1. Introduction

The fundamental objective of nuclear regulatory organization is to ensure that nuclear activities are conducted at all times in an acceptably safe manner. When we are talking about “acceptable” safety, it means that we have to try to achieve the safety level as “acceptable” as perceived by the public, not the one conceptualized by the technology itself.

In meeting this objective, the regulatory organization continues to ensure that its activities are transparent, technically sound, credible, and independent. More importantly, it should strive to ensure that the public are well informed about such activities and are confident upon regulatory organization. Public communication is one of the key approaches to attain such a goal.

The availability of on-line communications based on the development of information technology has made a major impact on the public’s better awareness of nuclear safety issues. Nuclear regulatory organization and operators are increasingly under pressure to communicate more actively with the public to satisfy their demand for knowing about the safety of nuclear facility. In coping with such challenges, KINS has developed a public information and communication policy to make public confident in their information and thus to earn the public trust and confidence toward nuclear safety.

It is widely acknowledged that public communication for ensuring nuclear safety has been an integral part of the operators’ activity. However, the roles and activities by the regulator in the area of public communication are increasingly required as the public become more interested in and concerned about safety issues.

Taking this into account, KINS has carried out several activities to be well-informed about how the public perceive nuclear safety and how much they are satisfied with the regulator’s activities, etc.

### 2. Survey Results and Lessons Learned

#### 2.1 Public Poll on Nuclear Safety

The starting point of communication is to identify what the public want. Based on this, KINS has conducted public opinion polls on a yearly basis since 2001 in order to know more about the public’s awareness toward nuclear safety and to identify their needs.

In 2005, KINS conducted public awareness survey to reveal how much the public is satisfied with the outcome of the regulatory body’s performance of duties and what reasons could be behind the public satisfaction or dissatisfaction. For the objective public poll, Gallup Korea carried out the respondent sampling, interviewer selection and training, personal interview, data collection and processing. The effective sample size of public poll was 200 local inhabitants around nuclear plants per each site, totally 800 persons. Among the total population, 400 of them are living within a 5km radius and the other 400 of them are outside a 5km radius. The margin of sampling error was  $\pm 4.9\%$  points with 95% confidence and  $\pm 3.5\%$  points with 95% confidence, respectively. The process of each poll was face-to-face interview by household visit using structured questionnaire and the 40% of retrieved questionnaires of each interviewer was validated by telephone. The respondents were selected by quota and stratified random sampling from the population of age 20–64 and local inhabitants around nuclear power plants.

The key results of survey on nuclear safety are as follows:

Firstly, the 58.9% of respondents said that they are satisfied with nuclear safety. Although this opinion has increased continuously since 2003, we have to pay attention to the fact that many people are still dissatisfied with nuclear safety matters (41.1%).

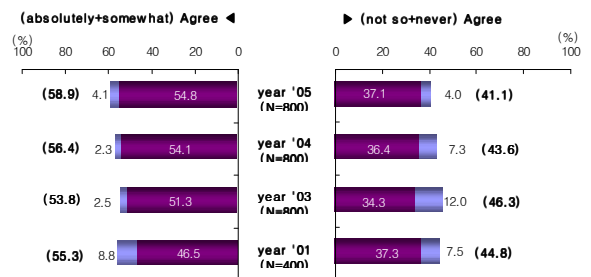


Figure 1. Satisfaction with nuclear safety

Secondly, the primary reason for dissatisfaction is, “the possibility of an unexpected accident” (42.9%). Next come “accidents happened” (21.0%) and “worries over radioactive leaks during operation” (15.5%).

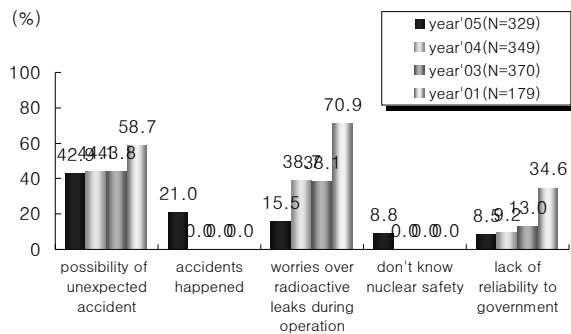


Figure 2. Reasons for dissatisfaction.

Thirdly, in response to the question of “how to improve nuclear safety”, 30.3% of the respondents pointed out “the technologies and equipment to enhance nuclear safety should be ensured”, and 21.3% emphasized the importance of “reinforcing regulations for nuclear safety”. In addition, “providing information to the public transparently” (20.6%) ranked the third while “extending public participation in regulatory process” (16.4%) is placed the fourth answers.

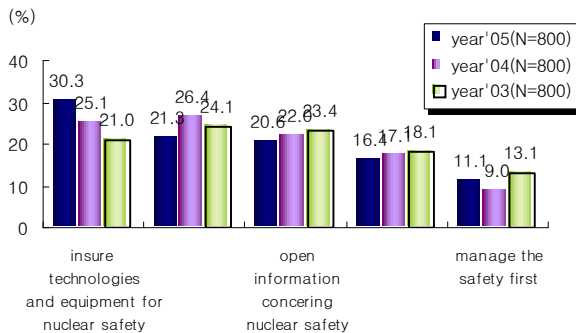


Figure 3. How to improve nuclear safety

Fourthly, when we asked the local inhabitants what kind of information they would like to know, they answered “present condition of radioactive waste products management” (46%), “the facts of accidents and incidents” (41.9%), and “the general status of the nuclear power plants (39.1%)” (duplicated answers).

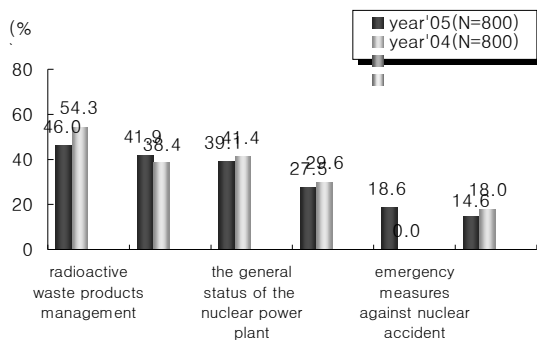


Figure 4. Information that respondents want to know

## 2.2 Lessons Learned from the Public Survey

KINS mission does not end with the assurance of safety of nuclear facilities but should be extended to build public confidence in regulatory actions. It should be accountable for conducting its duties and at the same time be responsible for satisfying the public through adequate communication about the results of its performance of duties – let the public know we assure the safety of nuclear power plant in due process and let them be satisfied with the process.

In order to improve nuclear safety, we have to focus more on the professionalism and technical competence rather than on the extending the opportunities for public participation in regulatory activities. As we see the survey results, the local inhabitants put the highest priority on the technical competence with which regulatory body is able to cope if it is faced on nuclear incidents.

In accommodating the demand from the public, the contents and type of information should be always considered. The priority should be given to the topics public want to know and are concerned about.

## 3. Conclusion

On the basis of the survey results and lessons learned from the communication with the public, KINS should improve strategies for more effective communication, which feature the planning, methods, details and new approaches of such communication.

Communication is a broad science and an imperfect art. This is why the regulatory body and operators are more and more involved in identifying the public’s needs and in coping with the communication challenges in a well-planned, effective and integrated manner.

## REFERENCES

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- [2] KINS/GR-283, Strategy for the Public for Understanding and Participation in Nuclear Safety Regulation, February, 2005.