

Information Series



CANADA AND THE G-7 NUCLEAR SAFETY INITIATIVE FOR CERTAIN SOVIET-DESIGNED REACTORS

The 1986 Chernobyl accident in the Ukraine and the end of the Soviet era revealed deficiencies in design, operation and safety practices at certain Soviet-designed nuclear reactors in Central and Eastern Europe.

At the 1992 Munich Summit, the G-7 (group of the 7 most industrialized countries: the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, Italy) in conjunction with the European Union established a Nuclear Safety Working Group to oversee assistance efforts to improve nuclear safety in Central and Eastern Europe. Two of the four Soviet reactor design types were determined to be "less-safe" and their closure at the earliest possible opportunity was advocated.

A Nuclear Safety Assistance Coordination Secretariat in the European Commission for OECD countries (G-24) was enhanced to provide a forum for the coordination of all international bilateral and multilateral nuclear safety assistance projects with the full participation of recipient countries.

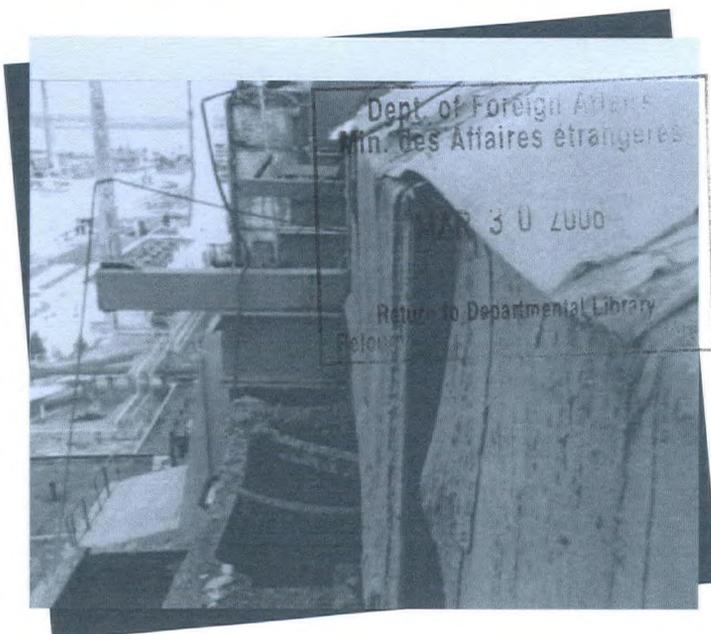
The G-7 and eight other donors (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Union) established the Nuclear Safety Account at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to provide grant funding to provide short-term safety upgrades at less-safe reactors pending their early closure in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Bulgaria. Most of these upgrades have now been made and the few remaining will be complete by 1999.

In 1995, the G-7, chaired by Canada, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ukraine to provide support for Ukraine's decision to close the last remaining operational reactor at Chernobyl by the year 2000. This involves reform of Ukraine's energy sector, work on decommissioning facilities and securing the containment structure around the destroyed Chernobyl unit-3 reactor.

At the 1997 Denver Summit, the G-7 agreed to fund US\$300 million of the US\$758 million Chernobyl Sarcophagus Shelter Implementation Plan. This includes a Canadian contribution of US\$20 million, bringing the total Canadian nuclear safety assistance contribution since 1992 to over US\$75 million.

Conditionality terms have been negotiated with recipient countries to promote the enhancement of safety procedures and practices. Also, work has been carried out to define conditions that would require closure of reactors in Ukraine, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Russia.

Close-up view of part of the Soviet-built Sarcophagus around Chernobyl, Unit 4.



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