

# Nuclear decommissioning: Turning waste into Wealth

Media interactions



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# Case study: Prof Paddy Regan

Prof. P. Regan

University of Surrey – National Physical Lab.

NPL – Chair of Radionuclide Metrology.

Nuclear physicist.

Paddy,  
“Father of 4 school-age  
kids, poor squash & golf  
player.”



# In the beginning 1

**What did I know about “the media” before I started in 2006?**

- Nothing about the media really
- Some radiation physics, I can understand numbers and I can read



# In the beginning 2

## Was I scared?

- Yes, a bit at the beginning – thought I would make an idiot of myself.
- Got much more relaxed with experience, because you know much more about the subject than the media.



# How it all started

**The polonium-210 poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko,  
November 2006**

- I was the right person, right time and right place and “willing to do it” and called by SMC
- Live TV interviews (BBC, CNN, ITN, Sky etc.)
- Recorded interviews (CNN, Russia Today, NBC news etc.)
- Radio phone-ins, live interviews (BBC R1, 2, 4 & 5)
- Lots of newspaper/magazine interviews/contributions



# What followed? 1

**Discussing mobile phones and wifi safety**

- The Richard and Judy show
- Numerous radio phone in shows



# What followed? 2

Discussing the opening of the LHC (big-bang!)



# What followed? 3

## Other “nuclear news”

- Syrian ‘nuclear reactor’ destroyed (2008)
- Earthquake at Japanese nuclear reactor site (2009)
- Funding crisis in UK science (2010)





# What followed? 4

## Fukushima (March, 2011)

- Neutrinos faster than light (2011)
- Al-Jazeera, future of nuclear power (2012)
- Polonium related to death of Yasser Arafat (2013)



# Tips for live TV interviews 1

- Studios are very small. You'll wait in a 'green room'
- You will be guided into place by the stage manager
- Look at the interviewer when being asked a question
- The interviewers are pros, engaging and easy to speak to



# Tips for live TV interviews 2

- They will be distracted while ‘not interviewing’ you
- Answer directly to them (like you’re down the pub)
- Wear smartish clothes (from the top up at least)
- Bring notes (you can put them in your pocket); ask colleagues before you go on screen to check your facts.



# Tips for live TV interviews 3

- It's all over before you know it
- Usually take you home afterwards
- Usually no payment (I never asked for any)
- Ask for a copy of the interview DVD before you go on
- Try to give examples rather than raw numbers e.g., one teaspoon of water in an entire swimming pool, rather than 1 in a billion



# Tips for live radio interviews 1

- Wear what you like
- You might well not be in the same studio as the interviewer (e.g., you Guildford BBC SCR (or at home), them in London)
- You can call the interviewer by their name e.g., Jeremy



# Tips for live radio interviews 2

- You can have loads of notes in front of you to refer to. Good to have some numbers etc.
- Be patient and try not to interrupt, it appears rude and you lose the audience
- Don't be rude/denigrate other people (e.g., during a phone in). Even if you disagree with them vehemently, you can sound very patronising



# Why should you bother?

- A good, enjoyable experience
- Increases professional profile (mostly positively)
- You learn new things
- Highlights the importance of science in society
- We have a duty to do such things if called upon. If not you, then who?



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