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Concern on missed nuclear security checks

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THE Government is to raise with British authorities its concerns over staff shortages at a number of nuclear facilities which have prevented security checks.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Public Enterprise, responsible for nuclear safety until the new departments take over, said it will examine the issue.

The first annual report of Britain's Office of Civil Nuclear Security, which regulates security arrangements at its civil nuclear sites, revealed that full yearly inspections had not been carried out at 22 of 31 nuclear facilities.

Director Michael Buckland-Smith said new commitments following the terrorist attacks in the US meant only nine inspections were carried out in 2001.

The inspections were at four nuclear power stations, three separate facilities at Sellafield and "two other sites." A further 22 sites did not get a full annual inspection last year.

Last night MEP Patricia McKenna complained: "Britain is adding new security measures and not ensuring existing security checks are being complied with - it's ludicrous."

Delivery of iodine tablets to every household in this country started yesterday and is expected to be completed by July 5.

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