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NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS OF UKRAINE: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THEIR OPERATIONS. ACHIEVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF JOURNALISTS

Ivan Krupskyy
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
Generala Chuprynky Str. 49, 79044, Lviv, Ukraine
e-mail: ivan.krupskyy@lnu.edu.ua
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3520-499X

Tetyana Viytovych
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
Generala Chuprynky Str. 49, 79044, Lviv, Ukraine
e-mail: tetyana.viytovych@lnu.edu.ua
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7416-3863

The topic of media coverage of nuclear power plant operations is extremely important and relevant, especially in times of war, when nuclear safety becomes a matter of national security. In his educational manual «Crisis journalism: how to write about nuclear power plants», associate professor Viktor Mazanyi offers practical recommendations for training journalists to work with this complex topic: from reliable sources of information to genre requirements and editorial policy principles. The publication serves as an effective tool for developing the trade competencies of future media professionals capable of informing the public effectively about threats and events in the field of nuclear energy.

Keywords: journalistic competencies, nuclear power plant safety, criteria for media coverage of emergencies at nuclear power plants, sources of information about NPPs, news and informational triggers related to NPPs.

Problem statement. The issue of covering the operation of nuclear power plants in the media during wartime is both critical and urgent, as it concerns not only the country's energy security but also the nuclear threat to millions of people. With the onset of the large-scale russian invasion, a real danger emerged regarding the capture or damage of strategic facilities such as the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plants. Public concern was growing, yet the media often failed to provide a full and comprehensive picture of events. Reports were limited to official statements from Energoatom, which, while accurate, were often superficial and failed to meet the informational needs of the public during crisis situations. Under such circumstances, there arose a pressing need for a professional guide

to help journalists deeply, accurately, and accessibly cover such sensitive topics. The purpose of this research is to analyze the approaches proposed by V. S. Mazanyi in his textbook «Crisis journalism: how to write about nuclear power plants» and determine how his recommendations can serve as a practical tool for training media professionals to handle crisis reporting in the nuclear energy sector.

Review of recent research and publications. Although the topic of emergency reporting at nuclear power plants is not new, modern ukrainian journalism lacks comprehensive textbooks that address both theoretical and practical aspects of working under the threat of nuclear hazards. While some studies examine public information dissemination during ecological disasters or industrial accidents, Mazanyi's book stands out for its systematic approach to media coverage of NPPs in both peacetime and wartime. His work also highlights the importance of journalist competency as carriers of specialized knowledge in the energy sector – a topic that has largely been overlooked in journalism education.

Methodological framework. To analyze the content and significance of Viktor Mazanyi's book, the study applied critical text analysis, content analysis of examples from the textbook (news articles, commentary, interviews) and a comparative method to compare the author's recommendations with real challenges faced by Ukrainian journalists covering NPP-related events during wartime. Additionally, expert evaluation of the methodological value of the author's advice was conducted in terms of its alignment with professional journalistic standards.

Presentation of the main material. As Russian forces advanced into historically Ukrainian territories during the war, public anxiety about the safety of nuclear power plants – particularly Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia – grew. Sparse newspaper reports and brief radio updates were insufficient to alleviate fears, especially given the public's awareness of the occupying force's brutality. Since all media updates regarding NPPs came solely from the state-run Energoatom, which governs all Ukrainian nuclear power plants, communication was limited to statements written in official business style largely using standardized phrases. As V. Mazanyi argues in his book, the journalistic community, unsure how to approach such extreme events, relied entirely on Energoatom's official releases. Though accurate, these messages lacked depth and prompted numerous questions.

Thus arose critical questions: how should journalists and their audiences be prepared for such situations? Where can they find trustworthy sources to clarify key aspects of the topic? What radiation indicators should be discussed with specialists, and which angles should be emphasized to communicate the dangers facing NPP personnel and nearby populations? These and similar issues form the core of Mazanyi's textbook.

The book is divided into three thematic sections, each interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The first addresses the development of specialized journalistic competencies for covering NPP safety, beginning logically with news triggers and stories related to NPPs, which the author identifies as indicators of informational security. It also covers the legal framework supporting citizens' right to information on radiation safety and the accuracy and reliability of media reports about emergencies.

The second section is dedicated to news writing methodology focused on the 30-kilometer observation zone around NPPs. Mazanyi discusses data collection related to environmental monitoring in this zone, how to use informational triggers effectively, and the importance of adhering to journalistic standards and genre requirements.

The third section – «Coverage of NPP Safety Topics in News, Commentary, and Interviews» – presents real examples of the author's own publications in the Ukrinform news agency and print media.

The author of the book provides compelling facts and examples that demonstrate his high level of expertise in the subject matter he explores. For instance, summarizing news reports on the operations of nuclear power plants, he rightly notes that the media often publish information about incidents at NPPs – such as a power unit blackout – alongside statements that there is a «threat to radiation safety». It is also mentioned that diesel generators were urgently activated, which restored the power supply to the unit. In other words, the pumps responsible for cooling the reactor resumed operation, and the situation was stabilized.

V. Mazanyi then reasonably asks: «Can an average reader truly understand what is happening? Perhaps it's not necessary to explain the presence of a diesel generator at the plant, but when it comes to the reactor's active zone, what mechanism or system is actually being discussed? That's not clear to everyone».

Another example is an official statement from the IAEA, published on the agency's website, which, in connection with a blackout at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP), included a warning about a potential «nuclear accident»: «The latest loss of external power is yet another reminder of the fragile nuclear safety and security situation at the plant, which can be affected by events far from the site itself. The IAEA continues to do everything it can to help prevent a nuclear accident».

In response to this statement, V. Mazanyi reasonably asks: «Shouldn't the media outlets that publish such quotes fulfill one of the basic standards of journalism – conveying information in a clear and understandable way?».

He then develops this thought further, asking: «What has actually happened, or what might happen next?». He predicts that readers living within a 5-30 km radius of the NPP will immediately begin searching for information on social media, on official government websites, or by calling acquaintances who work at the plant. However, most people will still find themselves alone with the same troubling question: who or what is really under threat, and how can one protect oneself from possible consequences?

Mazanyi advises journalists on how to act in such a situation. First and foremost, he argues, they should clarify whether the events caused an increase in gas-aerosol emissions from the reactors, the presence of inert radioactive gases, long-lived radionuclides, or iodine – substances that pose a grave danger to all living things if their levels exceed permissible limits.

Readers will undoubtedly be interested in understanding definitions of terms like «abnormal situation», «incident», «serious accident» and «major accident» at a nuclear power plant; who among the plant's specialists should be considered the primary source for journalists during crises; and where to find independent data on radioactive contamination of soil, air and water bodies.

These and many other specific questions are addressed in the educational manual by the Honored Journalist of Ukraine Viktor Mazanyi.

The texts included in the manual demonstrate the universality of the approach to covering events at nuclear power plants under any circumstances. In fact, this work emerged as a generalized response to the challenges brought on by the war, when nuclear

reactors came under direct threat from russian forces – any damage or reckless handling of which could have led to a second Chornobyl or another «Fukushima-1».

It is also an answer to the question of how to find accurate information about threats that may arise in the event of a breach in the physical protection of a nuclear power plant.

The true value of the manual lies in showing which sources should be used to obtain verified data during a critical situation at an NPP. These issues concern both nuclear and radiation safety – such as the danger of uncontrolled radioactive releases or contamination from aerosol substances – which could first harm the plant's operational staff and then the population living within a 30-kilometer radius. In essence, the manual demonstrates the vast exclusive opportunities available to a journalist who purposefully builds contacts with the relevant NPP specialists.

Associate professor V. S. Mazanyi's textbook serves as an effective tool for training future journalists who will competently report on nuclear energy issues in both ukrainian and international media. This very goal was declared by the experienced practitioner in the work of the only such center in Ukraine – the scientific and practical laboratory «Nuclear journalism», established and led by Mazanyi at the faculty of journalism of the international economic and humanitarian university named after academician Stepan Demianchuk.

This textbook provides students with a model for how to apply information genres in media coverage of nuclear power plants. It also includes references – so to speak – to where interesting and relevant topics can be found, with texts demonstrating a broad thematic range. At the same time, the materials emphasize that a journalist should possess not just surface-level knowledge but concrete technical understanding of NPP technologies. This allows them, firstly, to be well-prepared and a competent interlocutor when interviewing specialists or gathering information, and secondly, to avoid serious mistakes in their published work.

Therefore, the textbook features news articles, commentaries and interviews on various aspects of nuclear power plant operations. These show that the author is well-versed in the subject matter, including the environmental components of reactor operations, international cooperation, innovations, modernization of nuclear and radiation safety systems, IAEA projects and the work of the World Association of Nuclear Operators.

One especially important aspect is adherence to the requirements of journalistic genres. In the theoretical section, the author illustrates principles of editorial policy – based on his publications in the Ukrinform news agency – related to writing news stories. These include headline creation, structural composition, identification of sources, and appropriate citation.

The manual also outlines a methodology for writing news stories based on press releases from NPP information centers. In addition, it explores the craft of writing commentaries and interviews on current environmental, industrial, and economic topics within the nuclear energy sector.

Results and research prospects. Mazanyi's textbook not only addresses the needs of crisis-time journalism but also opens up new research directions in communication security, nuclear journalism, and emergency information management. Its content is well-suited for University level journalism curricula, workshops, and interdisciplinary courses. An expanded edition that considers future challenges related to climate change, energy reforms, and geopolitical instability could be of even greater value. The textbook already

serves as a practical tool in training young journalists and is likely to remain relevant for years to come.

Conclusions. In times of war, when strategic nuclear energy infrastructure is at risk, professional and responsible media coverage becomes critical. Associate Professor Viktor Mazanyi's textbook «Crisis journalism: how to write about nuclear power plants» functions not only as an academic resource but also as a practical guide for journalists working in the field of crisis communication and nuclear safety.

The analysis confirms that the book's structure, content, and methodological approach respond effectively to the modern demands of the media sector. The author emphasizes the importance of clear public communication, accurate terminology, reliable sources, and journalistic professionalism in covering nuclear issues.

The textbook deserves integration into journalism education programs and editorial practices, especially during crises. It offers practical value at a time when standard media procedures often fall short, and when the public urgently needs clear, accurate, and timely information. Thus, Mazanyi's work contributes meaningfully to shaping a responsible media environment in Ukraine and enhancing the role of journalism in nuclear safety awareness.

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АТОМНІ ЕЛЕКТРОСТАНЦІЇ УКРАЇНИ: ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ ЇХНЬОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ В МЕДІА УКРАЇНИ. ЗДОБУТКИ І ПРОРАХУНКИ ЖУРНАЛІСТІВ

Іван Крупський
Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка,
вул. Генерала Чупринки, 49, 79044, Львів, Україна,
e-mail: ivan.krupskyy@lnu.edu.ua
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3520-499X

Тетяна Війтович
Львівський національний університет імені Івана Франка,
вул. Генерала Чупринки, 49, 79044, Львів, Україна,
e-mail: tetyana.viytovych@lnu.edu.ua
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7416-3863

Закінчивши з відзнакою факультет журналістики Львівського університету імені Івана Франка, Віктор Мазаний тривалий час працював у різних медіа, зокрема більше 30 років був власним кореспондентом Українського національного інформаційного агентства «Укрінформ» у Рівненській області. Нині на викладацькій роботі – доцент кафедри соціальних комунікацій економіко-гуманітарного університету імені академіка Степана Дем'янчука у Рівному.

Серед багатьох тем Заслуженому журналісту України Вікторові Мазаному особливо близька тема атомної енергетики країни. Ще як журналіст-практик у багатьох своїх публікаціях – кореспонденціях, інтерв'ю, новинних повідомленнях, нарисах та зарисовках, ба навіть у книгах, він усебічно висвітлював діяльність Рівненської та Хмельницької атомних електростанцій. Зокрема, схвальний відгук серед читачів мали його книги «…І мить у вічність проростає», «Рівненська АЕС: доля», «Спалах ядра», «Корінь вогню», «Хмельницька АЕС: гармонія із довкіллям», «Енергетичний велет Хмельниччини» та інші.

У книзі «Кризова журналістика: як писати про АЕС» В. Мазаний дає практичні поради щодо використання передовсім інформаційних жанрів під час написання текстів для медіа про стан радіаційної безпеки АЕС, розглядає основи журналістської майстерності у відображенні впливу атомних електростанцій на довкілля і здоров'я населення при нормальній експлуатації та у кризових ситуаціях.

Автор книги подає матеріал, опираючись на низку законодавчих актів України та іноземних держав, і в такий спосіб демонструє методику дотримання журналістської етики та світових журналістських стандартів.

Кращому засвоєнню матеріалу книги сприяють приклади з численних журналістських матеріалів В. Мазаного, опублікованих українською та англійською мовами і поданих у теоретичній та хрестоматійній частинах видання. Вони, супроводжувані QR-кодами та інтернет-покликаннями, допоможуть читачеві повніше зрозуміти сутність тих чи тих положень книги.

Навчальний посібник В. Мазаного «Кризова журналістика: як писати про АЕС» призначений для студентів, викладачів інститутів, факультетів, відділень, кафедр журналістики, працівників преси, радіо й телебачення, пресслужб, однак він буде корисним для біологів, екологів, усіх, хто цікавиться проблемами функціонування атомних електростанцій та безпекою їхнього функціонування.

Ключові слова: фахові компетентності журналіста, безпека діяльності АЕС, критерії повідомлень у медіа про надзвичайні події на АЕС, джерела отримання інформації про АЕС, інформаційні приводи та новини про АЕС.