



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION III

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH U. S. ENRICHMENT CORP. ON POSSIBLE SAFETY VIOLATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet December 14 in Lisle, Illinois, with U. S. Enrichment Corp. officials to discuss possible safety violations at the Portsmouth, Ohio, gaseous diffusion plant. The plant formerly processed uranium for use as fuel in nuclear power plants.

The meeting, called a Predecisional Enforcement Conference, will begin at 10 a.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room on the NRC's Region III office, 801 Warrenville Road, in Lisle. The meeting is open to public observation. Following the meeting, NRC officials will be available for questions and comments from members of the public.

The plant is no longer processing or "enriching" uranium, and the plant staff is removing remaining uranium from pipes and other components in the course placing the plant on a standby status.

On September 22, the plant staff found the plant was not meeting requirements for preventing an accidental criticality, or "chain reaction," in a portion of processing piping holding enriched uranium. These requirements set pressure and moisture conditions for the piping.

NRC inspectors found possible violations of NRC requirements associated with the incident. While the requirements were not fully met, the plant's technical staff determined that an accidental criticality was unlikely because of the piping configuration and the actual conditions present.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, to provide the company with an opportunity to provide additional information on the situation, and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violation or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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