



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 19, 1996

Reverend Velma M. Shearer
124 Chestnut Street, #210
Englewood, Ohio 45322

Dear Reverend Shearer:

I am responding to your letter of November 26, 1996 which asks various questions about toxic, hazardous, and radioactive materials that will be used at, released by, or reported by the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant after the NRC assumes regulatory jurisdiction.

The NRC regulates radioactive material to protect public health and safety, worker safety, and the environment. However, the NRC is not authorized to regulate toxic materials or hazardous substances, nor does it file reports on these materials. Regulation of these materials is the responsibility of other agencies, such as the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and various state agencies. The U. S. Enrichment Corporation (USEC), which operates the Portsmouth plant, is required to file reports in accordance with the requirements of those agencies.

With respect to radioactive materials, the Portsmouth plant has a monitoring program for air and other effluents. The program is summarized in Chapter 9 of the enclosed Certification Evaluation Report (Enclosure 1). The NRC requires that radioactive effluents must be kept as low as reasonably achievable but in any case below the limits specified in NRC regulations. The NRC, in consultation with the U. S. Department of Energy and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, must report at least annually to Congress on the status of health, safety, and environmental conditions at the plant. The first report will be filed in about a year and will be available to the public. Effluents are further discussed in the USEC application for certification, which is available as Docket 70-7002 in the local public document room at the Portsmouth Public Library, 1220 Gallia Street, Portsmouth, Ohio 45662. Information on the effluent program will be updated in the first renewal application, which is scheduled to be filed with the NRC by April 15, 1998.

Further, with respect to radioactive materials, the plant will carry out an NRC-approved emergency plan which addresses accidents and releases of uranium compounds and related reaction products, such as hydrogen fluoride. Chapter 12 of the enclosed Certification Evaluation Report summarizes the plan. The plan has been coordinated with offsite response organizations as part of the USEC application for certification. Biennial exercises will be conducted to test individual elements of the plan. The plan states that the plant complies with the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.

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The plan explicitly provides for notification of releases which would affect persons offsite. A public warning system will be used if plant personnel believe it necessary to warn of an incident at the plant, which could include a uranium hexafluoride or hydrogen fluoride release. The system consists of outdoor warning sirens and emergency broadcast system announcements. The plan further calls for plant personnel to recommend protective actions to appropriate offsite authorities. In turn, these offsite authorities are responsible for alerting and notifying persons living within the offsite impacted areas.

We hope these answers will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Robert C. Pierson, Chief
Special Projects Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety
and Safeguards, NMSS

Enclosure: Portsmouth Certification Evaluation Report

Docket 70-7002

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Docket 70-7002 NRC File Center

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Sincerely,

Robert C. Pierson, Chief
Special Projects Branch
Division of Fuel Cycle Safety
and Safeguards, NMSS

Enclosures: 1. Certification Evaluation Report
2. 10 CFR Part 20

Docket 70-7002

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