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Region III Office of Public Affairs
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL 60532-4351

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NRC STAFF TO HOLD PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE
ON RESPONSE TO FIRE AT PORTSMOUTH URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with U. S. Enrichment Corporation officials on June 10 in Lisle, Illinois, for a predecisional enforcement conference on an apparent violation of NRC requirements in the company's response to a fire December 9 at its Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. The plant is located near Piketon, Ohio.

The enforcement conference will be at 1 p.m. in the Technical Conference Room, NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle. The meeting is open to public observation. NRC officials will be available after the meeting for questions from members of the public and the news media.

The fire caused extensive damage to equipment in the portion of the plant which removes extraneous gases from the processing system.

NRC inspectors identified several violations of NRC requirements associated with the fire. One of the violations -- failure to classify the fire as an "alert" under the facility's emergency plan -- is being considered for a possible fine or other enforcement action.

The alert classification would have led to the plant's activation of its Emergency Operations Center which would have assisted in managing the response to the fire and in better communication of information to the NRC and to State and local officials.

The company was issued a Notice of Violation on April 22 for three other violations, requiring the company to correct the violations and take steps to prevent a recurrence. No fine was proposed for these three violations, which involved other aspects of the plant's response to the fire, its preparation of procedures for responding to alarms, and its program for correcting problems.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

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

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