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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NRC RECEIVES APPLICATION FROM USEC FOR CERTIFICATION
OF URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has received applications from the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) for initial certification of uranium enrichment plants located near Paducah, Kentucky, and Piketon, Ohio. The NRC will hold public meetings May 23 and 24 near the plants to discuss the applications.

The two facilities were formerly operated by the Department of Energy (DOE) and are now leased and operated by USEC. They use a gaseous diffusion process to enrich uranium hexafluoride gas in the uranium-235 isotope, so that the material can be used as nuclear fuel in civilian nuclear power plants.

The Energy Policy Act of 1992 established the USEC and required the NRC to establish a certification process and standards for the gaseous diffusion plants (GDPs) to protect the public health and safety from radiological hazards and to provide for the common defense and security. The Act requires NRC to certify the GDPs annually for compliance with the certification standards. The NRC's rules governing the GDPs, which were effective last October 24, include procedural, radiological health, safety, safeguards, and security requirements.

Copies of the applications for certification are available for review and copying (except for classified and proprietary portions) for both the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant and the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant (located near Piketon) at the Commission's Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, N.W., Washington, DC. A copy of the application for the Paducah plant is available at the Paducah Public Library, 555 Washington Street, Paducah. A copy of the application for the Portsmouth plant is available at the Portsmouth Public Library, 1220 Gallia Street, Portsmouth.

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the applications by June 15. They should be addressed to the Chief, Rules Review and Directives Branch, Office of Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, D.C. 20555-0001. Comments received will be available for public review at the public document rooms described above.

Interested persons are also invited to attend the two public meetings that are being held to obtain comments on the initial certification of these facilities. The meeting on the Paducah plant will be held at the Paducah Information Age Park Resource Center in Paducah on May 23 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting on the Portsmouth plant will be held at the Vern Riffe Joint Vocational School in Piketon on May 24 at 7:00 p.m.

Persons who wish to speak at the meetings may register in advance via written notice by May 16 to Ms. Rocio Castaneira, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Mail Stop T-8-A-33, Washington, DC 20555-0001; speakers should specify at which of the two meetings they plan to speak. Speakers may also register on a sign-up sheet that will be available at each meeting.

The NRC's decision on the initial certification is expected in October.

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