



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SAFETY EVALUATION REPORT ON PROPOSED USEC FACILITY IN OHIO

After careful review and thorough evaluation, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has concluded that there would be no significant environmental impact from operation of a proposed test and demonstration "Lead Cascade" gas centrifuge uranium enrichment facility and that the programs proposed by the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) would provide adequate safeguards and protection for the health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment.

The findings are included in two reports, an Environmental Assessment and a Safety Evaluation Report. The NRC intends to issue a license for the facility, to be located at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon, Ohio, after USEC finalizes a lease arrangement with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), which owns the Portsmouth plant.

USEC applied for a license to build and operate the facility, to be known as the American Centrifuge Lead Cascade Facility, on February 12, 2003. The Lead Cascade is a test and demonstration facility based on DOE's advanced centrifuge technology for enriching uranium for use in producing fuel for nuclear reactors. The Lead Cascade will consist of up to 240 full-scale centrifuges, which will recycle the enriched and depleted uranium; the only withdrawals of uranium from the cascade will be small samples. The facility will be authorized to possess up to 250 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride.

USEC intends to follow the Lead Cascade with a full-scale uranium enrichment plant using centrifuge technology. On January 12, USEC announced plans to build this centrifuge plant at the Piketon site.

An announcement of the Environmental Assessment's availability was published January 27 in the Federal Register. Both reports will be available through the agency's ADAMS document management system on the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>. For the Environmental Assessment, use accession number ML040210751. For the Safety Evaluation Report, use accession number ML040280554. For more information about uranium enrichment, see the NRC's fact sheet at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/enrichment.html>.

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