



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

61 Forsyth Street SW, Atlanta GA 30303

Web Site: www.nrc.gov

No. II-04-033

CONTACT: Ken Clark (404)562-4416
Roger Hannah (404)562-4417

April 17, 2004

E-mail: OPA2@nrc.gov

NRC APPROVES RESTART OF FINAL STAGE IN URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE PROCESS AT HONEYWELL PLANT IN ILLINOIS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff informed officials of the Honeywell International, Inc. uranium hexafluoride processing plant in Metropolis, Illinois, on April 17 that the agency has no objection to the restart of the final stage of a three-stage process to produce the chemical compound.

On March 27, the NRC staff authorized the company to resume ore preparation, the first stage in a process that had been shut down since a December 22 release of uranium hexafluoride to the environment outside the plant. After reviewing additional improvements, the NRC staff approved the second stage of the process (the production of uranium tetrafluoride, or UF₄, called green salt) on April 14. The approval to restart the final stage, called fluorination and distillation, allows the company to produce the final product, uranium hexafluoride (UF₆).

The NRC sent the company a Confirmatory Action Letter following the December 22 release which stated that Honeywell would discuss with the NRC both the results of its own investigation and proposed corrective actions prior to restarting the processes involved in the incident.

Based on NRC inspectors' reviews of corrective actions and observation of work activities, the agency is satisfied that the company's actions have been adequate to allow the safe restart of all three stages of production: ore preparation, uranium tetrafluoride (UF₄) or green salt, and fluorination and distillation leading to uranium hexafluoride (UF₆).

As previously announced, the NRC has scheduled another public meeting in Metropolis for April 21 to discuss the company's improvement efforts, along with NRC inspections and review. The meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the large Second Floor Courtroom at the Massac County Courthouse at 1 Superman Square. NRC officials will be available prior to the meeting's conclusion to answer any questions from interested local citizens.

###