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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Docket No. 70-7004-ML

TEMPLATE = SECY-038

SECY-02

1-11-07
 To the best of my knowledge this copy of a newspaper clipping from the Columbus Dispatch newspaper, is approx. 15 yrs. old? I've been a member of this community since 7-24-51; I'm 55 yrs. old and am opposing the license mentioned (we're healing) in 1-10-07 Waverly news watchman paper. I firmly believe a nightmare will re-use at itself & definitely oppose a 30 yr. license? My belief is that plans are to develop a site for waste storage, not enrichment? I believe that if a former plantworker & President of a worried group about plants effects on workers & residents is concerned, more extensive research should be done.
 Sincerely,
 Henna J. (Bond) Gong
 Resident of Pike Co.

U.S. burned radioactive waste at Piketon plant

By Michael B. Lafferty
 Dispatch Science Reporter

PIKETON, Ohio — Low-level radioactive waste was burned at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant from the mid-1950s until 1986, say U.S. Department of Energy documents obtained by *The Dispatch*.

The revelation that perhaps tens of thousands of pounds of uranium-contaminated waste were burned annually was part of a 1991 report. That report also listed numerous instances of poisonous and radioactive materials escaping into plant storm water systems that eventually drained into Piketon-area streams.

The report did not say how much uranium-contaminated waste was burned, but the amount was less than 50,000 pounds annually, it said.

The report noted that the waste contained larger-than-allowable amounts of heavy metals such as mercury, barium and cadmium.

The plant is on 3,000 acres about 65 miles south of Columbus and about a mile east of the Scioto River in Pike County. The plant processes uranium fuel for nuclear power plants. The state and federal Environmental Protection agencies are overseeing an extensive environmental cleanup there.

The Dispatch has been unable to find anyone who knows how much or for how long uranium was burned.

"We know they burned uranium. I understand it wasn't done very long," said Sheri Bianchin, who manages the U.S. EPA's part of the cleanup.

Incinerator operators kept a log but didn't note the amounts burned, said Eugene Gillespie, Energy Department site manager. The amount listed in the report was a worst-case scenario, he added.

"It probably was less, but how much less nobody knows," Gillespie said.

The Piketon incinerator had smokestacks and contained uranium particles, the report said. It was near a building used for decontamination and cleaning.

Officials say the uranium fell to the ground nearby and the wind carried little, if any, off the site.

A Dwight Baldwin, chairman of the plant's Environmental Advisory Committee and a geology professor at Miami University, said he wasn't surprised when he learned recently of the uranium burning.

"It was a common practice at Fernald (Ohio)," he said, referring to the contamination at the Feed Production Materials Center, another federal nuclear plant north of Cincinnati.

Baldwin said he doesn't think the burning should have been allowed but said the Energy Department was then a self-regulating agency. "Lots of things were accepted at the time that shouldn't be done," he said.

Donna Goodman, an environmental specialist for the Ohio EPA, said the Energy Department allowed up to 350 grams of uranium — about 12 ounces — per batch of burned material. No one contacted by *The Dispatch* was able to say if that limit was ever exceeded.

In addition to the low-level radioactive waste, the

material burned in an original incinerator and one that replaced it in 1971 included cardboard, paper, plastic and rags.

The plant is now operated by Martin Marietta Utilities Services under a contract with the U.S. Enrichment Corp., a government-owned corporation. Goodyear Atomic and Martin Marietta Energy Systems previously ran the plant.

Plant operators and Energy Department officials consistently have acknowledged pollution problems, but have minimized the escape of radioactive and other hazardous materials from the site.

A previous Ohio EPA study found radioactivity in fish and radioactivity and heavy metals in sediments in streams on the plant site. But Maria Galanti, of the state EPA, said there is no evidence that hazardous materials have been found beyond the plant boundary. However, Baldwin said, it is likely that at least low levels of hazardous materials made their way off the site.

Studies to determine how much, if any, has escaped and its effects on the environment are just beginning.

Environmental critics have called the plant a nightmare.

"It's going to be hard to figure out how much exposure we've had off site," said Vina Colley, a former plant worker and president of a group worried about the plant's effects on workers and residents.

"This proves the company knew about all the releases from the very beginning. They've lied to the community, to the workers. I think the exposures are going to be worse than we've been told," she said.

In a 1992 document, the Energy Department reported the release of 23,122 pounds of uranium into the air and 17,213 pounds of uranium into the water from 1955 to 1987. An estimated 11,308 pounds of uranium also was hauled away.

The report, prepared by the Energy Department's office in Oak Ridge, Tenn., was an analysis of active pollution sites at the plant. It was prepared for the plant's natural resources steering committee and explains how some of the pollution has occurred since the plant opened in 1955.

The report includes specific instances of pollution dating back nearly 20 years. For example, on July 19, 1975, 250,000 gallons of hypochlorite, a sterilizing chemical, was discharged from the decontamination building into a drainage ditch.

The most well-known incident occurred in 1978 and involved the release into the air and ground of 21,000 pounds of uranium hexafluoride, the raw material processed to make nuclear fuel.

The report also details examples of known pollution incidents and lists potential problems from them.

"We know they burned uranium. I understand it wasn't done very long."
Sheri Bianchin
 U.S. EPA official

Plant polluted enough for Superfund status / 1C

DESERT STATES HALF-DANCE

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