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Portsmouth/Piketon Residents for Environmental Safety and Security

March 23, 1994

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USNRC

(59FR6792)

Secretary, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission,
Washington, DC 20555, Attention: Docketing and
Service Branch.

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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
DOCKETING & SERVICE

We are writing to express our concerns pertaining to public meetings at
the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion plant also know as the U.S.
Enrichment Corporation. We feel that this is very important that we are
allowed to hold public meetings.

Community residents and workers need to recapture their rights,
especially to debate the imposition of risk which has been placed upon us.

Workers at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant and other DOE sites
have been victims of human radiation experiments during the Cold War.
Committee Chairman John D. Dingell and Secretary Tara O'Toole said
Thursday "these workers were continually assured by their government
that there was no risk to their health or safety." O'Toole said " Health and
Safety will not play second fiddle to cleanup yet here at the Piketon site
cleanup has came first.

The HEU and TRANSURANIC daughters is a much bigger problem and
wide spread through the plant on site and off than what has been told.
Experts seem to agree that whenever significant amounts of radiation are
involved, there are risks.

Sincerely,

Vina K Colley
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A-plant woes

Sides disagree whether cuts will affect cleanup

By SUSAN SCHWARTZ
Times Staff Writer

A proposed \$400,000 cut to the environmental cleanup budget at the uranium enrichment plant in Piketon will not seriously harm cleanup efforts, plant officials said Thursday.

"It's a question of prioritization," said John Sheppard, Department of Energy deputy site manager for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. "It could delay some projects somewhat, but we're not anticipating any significant effects."

Although the new U.S. Enrichment Corporation now controls the plant's production of enriched uranium, the Department of Energy continues to be responsible for past environmental damage and radioactive wastes at the site, as well as the highly enriched uranium manufactured at the facility before USEC took over.

Thomas Grumbly, assistant energy secretary, told Congress Wednesday that the department wants to cut \$400,000 from the \$62.6 million cleanup budget at the plant. About \$12 million total is being cut from the Fernald and Mound plant cleanup budgets, following questions about the way the money was being spent.

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Official: Piketon, other monitoring not adequate

By VIRGINIA BARAZIA
Times Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Department of Energy has not adequately monitored workers' exposure to radioactive and toxic chemicals at its nuclear weapons plants, an agency official said Thursday.

Assistant Energy Secretary Tara O'Toole told a House subcommittee that health monitoring at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant and other DOE sites often failed to ensure worker safety.

The subcommittee has been probing health and safety conditions at DOE facilities for several months.

Committee Chairman John D. Dingell, D-Mich., likened weapons plant workers to the victims of human radiation experiments during the Cold War.

"These workers were continually assured by their government that there was no risk to their health or safety," he said. "In reality, conditions at many, if not all, of the plants may have been extremely hazardous."

O'Toole said DOE's Cold War philosophy that worker health and safety were secondary to weapons production led to its failure to keep

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RECORD

Cuts: Cleanup can go on, but money needed now

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Sheppard said he did not yet know what programs might be cut.

Vina Colley, president of the Portsmouth/Piketon Residents for Environmental Safety and Security, said that, while there has been some misallocation of cleanup funding in the nuclear industry, the money shouldn't be taken away.

"We need to cut misuses of the money by some contractors," she said. "But every bit of that money needs to be in cleanup and providing jobs for local workers."

"We need the money. We're not even really in the cleanup process yet. We're still just containing it, not cleaning it up. We need to get it into containers and above the ground so we can watch it."

Sheppard said a project to clean up toxic TCE from oil spilled on the ground of an area about one-third the size of a football field is about halfway finished.

Workers have almost completed constructing a pump and treatment facility for an old collection pond that contains TCE, Sheppard said.

The TCE used to be used as an industrial solvent at the facility. It has since been replaced with a less toxic substance.

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Official: Piketon, other monitoring not adequate

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accurate data on exposures to harmful substances.

"Clearly some people were exposed to excessive doses of radiation," she said.

Some exposed workers were not monitored, making it almost impossible to track health problems caused by the radiation, O'Toole added.

An agency review found that contractors often misused measuring equipment and failed to record how many workers received harmful doses of radiation, she said.

Recent DOE efforts to improve health surveillance have also fallen short, according to the General Accounting Office, a congressional investigative arm.

A program established in 1989 has not been fully implemented because of staffing and budget problems, the GAO found. As of last September, only seven of DOE's 33 sites were part of the new health surveillance program. The Piketon plant was not participating.

O'Toole pledged to implement a more comprehensive medical surveillance program at high-risk DOE cleanup sites within 18 months.

"Health and safety will not play second fiddle to cleanup," she said.