

CARL MULLENS

My name is Carl Mullens. I have worked at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion plant for 25 years. I worked as a Chemical operator for many of those years. I am now working as a janitor at the plant. Even as a janitor I have numerous restrictions that limit me at doing my job. I am no longer a chemical operator because I cannot wear a respirator and my health is in very poor condition.

On January 27, 1995, a co-worker, Ron Hurley and I were involved in a fluorine release. I was in the X-342 building when an alarm sounded. I responded like I was told and trained to do. The procedure that I was required to follow directed me to unknowingly enter the release area where there were unknown concentrations of fluorine and hydrofluoric acid. We were taken to the plant hospital and examined by the plant medical doctor. Then plant manager directed us to return to our job. The sampling that was done a half hour later indicated level of hydrofluoric acid that was immediately dangerous to life and health. I found out later that the plant doctor had noted in my medical records that we could have had fluorine poisoning. I also found out later that the reason for the release was that the valves that were being used in the facility were inferior to what was used in the past. There was no testing, which was required, done to ensure those types of valves were adequate to be used. In fact the company knew the valves would be more likely to fail than the ones used previously.

Within few days after the incident, I started having joint pain and swelling. I went to the emergency room where the physician called the poison control center. The doctor at the hospital then advised me to change jobs.

I filed a state worker's compensation claim and it was lost after the appeals process. The companies had attorneys to represent them in my case. During my hearings the company representatives said that fluorine was what was in toothpaste and it would not hurt you.

Along with fluorine and hydrofluoric acid, I have been exposed to unknown levels of radiation, hazardous solvents, PCBs, lead, arsenic, nitric acid, sulfuric acid, nickel, argon gas, chromic acid, along with many other substances.

Since my injury there has been many efforts to remove me from my job. Even to the point of forcing me into disability retirement.

The fluorine and hydrofluoric acid burned my sinuses and lungs. I had hoped the Department of Energy would take care of me because they admitted they exposed me and other workers and did not monitor us properly throughout our working life at the plant. It looks like they have now decided to ignore their responsibility by law to assist sick workers. These new rules do nothing to assist workers in filing state compensation claims. They really are just a cruel hoax on sick workers. Thank you for your time.

TESTIMONY OF CARL MULLENS

ON

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S PROPOSED RULE
"GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICIAN PANEL
DETERMINATIONS OF WORKER REQUESTS FOR
ASSISTANCE IN
FILING FOR STATE WORKERS' COMPENSATION
BENEFITS"**

RADISSON HOTEL CINCINNATI AIRPORT

OCTOBER 25, 2001