

TESTIMONY OF DONNA J. HOWARD

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

DONNA J. HOWARD

MY NAME IS DONNA J. HOWARD. I WORK AT THE PORTSMOUTH GASEOUS DIFFUSION PLANT. I HAVE BEEN A URANIUM MATERIAL HANDLER FOR TWELVE YEARS. I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE, FLUORINE, HF, TECHNIUM, CLF3, PCB, ASBESTOS, HYDROGEN, FIBERGLASS, ARSENIC, ALPHA, AMMONIA, ALPHA, BETA AND GAMMA RADIATION AND EXCESSIVE HEAT AND NOISE.

WHEN I CAME TO WORK AT THE FACILITY, I WAS THRILLED BECAUSE I HAD TO MAKE A LIVING FOR MY FAMILY AND THIS WAS THE BEST PAYING JOB IN MY AREA. AS SOON AS I BEGAN MY TRAINING FOR THE JOB I REALIZED THE RISKS I WAS TAKING AND ME AND MY FELLOW WORKERS SAID WE SHOULD RECEIVE HAZARDOUS DUTY PAY BECAUSE OF ALL THE HAZARDS WE WERE BEING EXPOSED TO.

WHEN I BEGAN WORK AT PORTSMOUTH, I HAD PERFECT EYE SIGHT. NOW I WEAR BIFOCALS. PLANT TRAINING TELLS ME GAMMA AND BETA RADIATION IS PARTICULARLY DAMAGING TO THE EYES.

I HAVE BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO RAISE MY LIFE INSURANCE POLICY BECAUSE MY LIVER ENZYMES ARE TEN TIMES NORMAL. MY ANNUAL PHYSICAL AT THE PLANT HAS INDICATED THESE FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS. I HAVE SEEN A LIVER SPECIALIST AND HE CAN NOT ACCOUNT FOR THE INCREASE. I HAVE TALKED TO SEVERAL FELLOW WORKERS WHO SAY THEIR ENZYMES ARE ALSO ELEVATED. THE ONLY THING WE HAVE IN COMMON IS THE PLACE WE WORK.

I HAVE PRETTY MUCH RESIGNED MYSELF TO THE FACT THAT I WILL DEVELOP CANCER. I AM JUST WAITING TO SEE WHERE IT WILL SHOW UP AND WHEN. I HAVE WATCHED MANY OF MY FELLOW WORKERS, SOME I HAVE WORKED WITH SIDE BY SIDE, WHO HAVE FALLEN ILL AND DIED FROM CANCER. I THINK TO MYSELF, I'M NEXT.

IT APPEARS TO ME THAT I CAN EXPECT NO HELP FOR ME OR MY FAMILY IN GETTING STATE WORKERS COMPENSATION FOR ALL THE YEARS AND ALL THE THINGS THAT I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO. UNTIL NOW, I'VE WORKED UNDER THE ASSUMPTION THAT DOE HAS BEEN LOOKING OUT FOR WORKERS IN HAZARDOUS AREAS. I AM TRULY DISSAPPOINTED IN THIS PROPOSED RULE.