

ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY RICHARDSON'S AUGUST 8, 1999 ACTION PLAN FOR PADUCAH

In addition to the ongoing DOE investigation at Paducah, a number of other departmental responses are underway in response to the Secretary's action plan announced on August 8. In addition to an ongoing Institute of Medicine review of health effects for workers at Paducah and other DOE sites, an ongoing review of needed resources to support near-term actions at Paducah, and a legal assessment of contractual responsibilities of contractors, departmental actions underway include the following.

Review of Flow of Recycled Materials Throughout DOE Complex

This project will address the flow and characteristics of recycled uranium over the last fifty years. The specific goals are to:

1. Identify the mass flow of recycled uranium throughout the DOE-complex from early production to mid-1999. Create an unclassified inter-site flowsheet.
2. Identify the characteristics and contaminants in the major uranium streams, specifically, the technetium, neptunium, plutonium or other isotopic content of concern to worker or public health and safety.
3. Conduct site mass balance activities sufficiently thorough to identify a significant concern for potential personnel exposure or environmental contamination.

DOE expects this work to be complete by June, 2000.

Exposure Assessment Project

This goal of this project, managed by the DOE Office of Environment, Safety and Health and conducted by a team from the University of Utah, is to establish the potential ranges of worker radiation exposures and identify, document and communicate the radiological issues that may have affected worker health at the Paducah site since its opening. This work will inform Paducah workers of their potential radiation exposure and will help determine whether there may be any potential for adverse worker health impacts from occupational radiation exposure.

The project began the week of September 13, 1999 when the University of Utah team began to interview workers and conduct an onsite records search. It is expected to take six months and consists of the following subtasks:

1. Mapping the various processes conducted at Paducah and identifying the associated potential radiological hazards, over time. This will include identification of any events, process changes, or other developments that may have presented potential radiological hazards.

2. Identifying, retrieving and evaluating radiological and worker exposure records to determine what the available records inform us about radiological conditions and worker exposures.
3. Determining the feasibility of conducting a bioassay program for workers that would measure actual individual radiation dose due to radioactive material taken in the person.
4. Determining the feasibility of a radioassay of residual materials that would determine the radiological content of residual materials at Paducah and be useful in determining workers' potential exposure to hazards.
5. Developing occupational exposure profiles. This subtask will compile all information gained in previous subtasks to develop bounds or ranges of possible radiation exposures of workers at Paducah.
6. Instituting a worker communication program to ensure that workers understand and act on results.

This project is expected to be completed by April 2000.

Medical Monitoring for Current and Former Workers

Under an ongoing DOE pilot program, medical monitoring is currently provided for 1,200 former workers per year, 300 at each of the gaseous diffusion plants. As part of the Secretary's action plan, the program will be expanded to include additional former employees at each site as well as current workers at each site. The program will provide an objective, independent and expert evaluation of the health status of workers. The medical monitoring program will be implemented by an organization or consortium of organizations staffed by highly qualified physicians and other health professionals specializing in the field of occupational health. The accompanying educational program will help workers understand of prior exposures and current health risks.

As in the current program, medical screening will be conducted for health hazards associated with exposure to silica, beryllium, ionizing radiation, solvents and other hazards related to a participant's work at the facility. The actual screening tests conducted will be tailored to a worker's exposure history and will generally include a physical examination, blood tests, and chest x-rays. Where warranted by a worker's exposure history, specialized tests and other specialized screenings will be conducted. Physicians will review individual test results from the screening program and communicate results to program participants. They will call patients to communicate urgent findings based on examinations and the need for follow-up of abnormal test results. Project personnel will also advise participants who need medical follow up about possible sources of health care. Where appropriate, assistance will also be provided in helping participants file claims for workers compensation.

The program will be independently conducted by the Paper Allied-Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers Union with support from medical experts from the Queens College of the City University of New York.