

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle IL 60532-4351

RIII-99-050
CONTACT: Jan Strasma, (630) 829-9663
E-MAIL: opa3@nrc.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 21, 1999

NRC PROPOSES \$88,000 FINE AGAINST U.S. ENRICHMENT CORP.
FOR EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION VIOLATION AT PADUCAH PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed an \$88,000 fine against U. S. Enrichment Corporation of Bethesda, Maryland, for discriminating against a manager who raised safety issues at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Paducah, Kentucky.

NRC regulations prohibit employers at nuclear facilities from discriminating against employees who raise safety issues.

The NRC Office of Investigations determined that the Manager of Quality Systems at the Paducah plant was transferred in August 1998 to a non-managerial position in the Training Department after he expressed concerns about the quality assurance program.

He told his supervisor that the plant was not fulfilling all the requirements of an industry standard for quality assurance programs. He also stated his concern that the plant's Quality Assurance Program would be adversely affected by the Quality Systems staff having to perform other activities at the plant.

The investigation was completed in March of this year, and the NRC staff met with company officials on June 30 for a predecisional enforcement conference to review the case.

The company contended that the manager was transferred because of performance considerations. Based on the investigation findings and subsequent information, however, the NRC staff determined that the decision to transfer the manager was based, in part, on his raising of concerns about the Quality Assurance Program.

U. S. Enrichment Corporation informed the NRC in October that it was taking extensive corrective actions to help its managers address the safety concerns of its employees and to encourage a "nuclear safety conscious" work environment.

The company has until January 19 to pay the fine or to challenge it. If U.S. Enrichment Corporation challenges the fine, and it is subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

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