



NRC Approves Higher Enrichment-Level Operations At USEC Inc.'s Paducah, Kentucky, Plant; - Paducah Facility Can Now Enrich to Maximum Levels Needed by Customers -

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BETHESDA, Md.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--March 19, 2001--The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) announced today that it has amended the operating certificate for USEC's Paducah, Kentucky, plant to allow it to enrich uranium at higher levels. The Paducah facility will now be able to enrich up to the maximum levels required by USEC customers.

Today's decision by the NRC will allow the Paducah plant to enrich uranium at levels up to 5.5 percent U-235. U-235 is the fissionable isotope that enables uranium to be used as fuel for commercial nuclear power reactors. Enrichment at Paducah was previously limited to 2.75 percent U-235, and the company's Portsmouth, Ohio, plant further enriched the uranium to four to five percent. Most nuclear utilities use fuel enriched to 4 to 5 percent U-235.

This NRC approval culminates more than 18 months of intensive effort during which company employees put in place the nuclear safety controls, procedure and training enhancements, and physical modifications necessary to upgrade Paducah operations.

"We are very pleased that the NRC has once again demonstrated its confidence in the Paducah facility and our operating team with this certificate amendment," said Morris Brown, Vice President, Operations. "This positions the company to move forward with our business strategy to consolidate current enrichment operations at Paducah and to continue to increase efficiencies and reduce costs. We appreciate the NRC's extensive efforts to conduct the review in a timely manner."

"Preparing for this upgrade has been a complex and challenging task for the plant's managers and employees," said Howard Pulley, Paducah General Manger. "But, by keeping safety as our first priority and using outstanding teamwork to solve problems, we were able to meet this objective. Our employees, the labor unions and the management team demonstrated an exceptional commitment to succeed, and they made this achievement possible. They have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to go above and beyond expectations to make sure the Paducah plant is the safest and most effective enrichment facility possible."

Plant staff will immediately begin increasing the plant's enrichment level, or "assay", as part of a planned enrichment demonstration that is scheduled for completion in late April.

USEC announced last June that it would cease enrichment at its Portsmouth plant and reduce costs through consolidating its enrichment processes at the Paducah plant. The Portsmouth plant will continue to provide shipping and transfer functions for the company.

USEC Inc., a global energy company, is the world's leading supplier of enriched uranium fuel for commercial nuclear power plants.

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