



NRC NEWS

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NRC REQUIRES IMPROVEMENTS AT USEC PADUCAH FACILITY

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued three Confirmatory Orders to the United States Enrichment Corporation's Paducah, Ky., facility as part of settlement agreements involving three unrelated issues.

One issue involved operators concealing damaged equipment and falsifying records while moving a uranium hexafluoride cylinder. In the second issue, classified information was mishandled when a package was sent to an unapproved mailing address. The third issue stemmed from a U.S. Department of Labor decision that USEC retaliated against a former manager and an NRC concern for the potential influence this would have on the willingness of other employees to raise safety concerns.

In each case, USEC requested the alternative dispute resolution process, which includes the use of a mediator, to resolve its differences with the NRC concerning the apparent violations and to discuss corrective actions. The confirmatory orders document USEC's commitments to the NRC reached as part of the NRC's ADR process, which can be requested in place of traditional NRC enforcement. Often, the ADR process is more effective in developing effective long-term corrective actions than traditional enforcement.

As part of the settlement agreements, USEC has agreed to a number of corrective actions and enhancements, including procedure revisions, improved oversight and an incorporation of lessons learned into training. The company also agreed to a review of the events and a sharing of information with other USEC facilities. Some of the actions agreed to by USEC go beyond what would have been required under the NRC's traditional enforcement process.

In consideration of the commitments made by USEC, the NRC will not propose a civil penalty, issue a Notice of Violation or take other enforcement action on the three issues. The NRC will, however, evaluate adherence to the commitments during future inspections.

Copies of the NRC letters detailing the agreements and required actions are publicly available online in the NRC's Agency-wide Document Access and Management System, www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html. The ML numbers are ML092220062 (discrimination), ML092300522 (classified information) and ML092300516 (damaged equipment).

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