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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC RESCHEDULES MEETING FOR FEBRUARY 5 TO DISCUSS FINDINGS
OF INSPECTION INTO DEC. 9 FIRE AT PORTSMOUTH URANIUM PLANT

A Nuclear Regulatory Commission inspection team will meet February 5 with U. S. Enrichment Corporation officials in Piketon, Ohio, to discuss the preliminary findings of its review of a December 9 fire at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

The meeting, previously scheduled for January 8, had been postponed because of severe weather.

The plant, which processes uranium for use as fuel for nuclear power plants, is located at Piketon, Ohio.

The meeting will be at 12 noon in the Piketon Research and Extension Center, Ohio State University, 1864 Skyville Road, Piketon. It is open to public observation. NRC Deputy Regional Administrator James Caldwell and other NRC staff members will be available after the meeting to answer questions from the news media and members of the public.

The fire occurred in the portion of the plant which removes extraneous gases from the processing system. It appeared to result from the overheating of metal components which ignited the uranium hexafluoride in the processing system.

The plant fire brigade extinguished the fire. There were minor injuries to two plant workers and two fire fighters. Environmental surveys showed no evidence of a release of uranium outside the immediate area of the process building.

The NRC team, called an Augmented Inspection Team, will issue a written report in early February. The team's findings were summarized in a Preliminary Notification issued on January 13. This summary is available on the NRC's internet web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/pn/pn39858b.htm> and from the NRC Region III Office of Public Affairs.

The written report will be also posted on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/reports>.

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