PACRO Recycles Transformer Oil
from Former Switchyards, Benefits Community

The Paducah Area Community Reuse Organization (PACRO) is the entity designated by the DOE to identify and reuse assets, and to help offset the loss of jobs and economic impact. There are four switchyards located at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (Paducah Site), the C-531, C-533, C-535 and C-537; each switchyard contains roughly 90 transformers. During Paducah Site enrichment operations, electrical consumption amounted to approximately the same amount of electricity as a large metropolitan city (e.g. St. Louis, Washington DC). Each transformer is roughly capable of providing power to the city of Paducah. PACRO recently partnered with Four Rivers Nuclear Partnership (FRNP) to perform contracting assistance to attain a company capable of performing the scope of work. In 2019, PACRO sold approximately 200,000 gallons of recycled (non-PCB) oil and recycled metals and equipment from two of the four switchyards. Sale of the oil generated $186,886, which is the largest project PACRO has performed to date.

The current demand for electricity needed to support future Paducah Site missions (e.g. environmental cleanup) will only require a small fraction of what was necessary when it was enriching uranium. As a result, all four of the switchyards are slated for decommissioning and dismantling. Construction of a new Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) substation is underway and nearing completion. Work began in July 2019, but was halted on March 23, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Work resumed in June 2020. The new substation is adequately configured for decades of future cleanup operations and replaces antiquated and over-sized equipment. More importantly, the upgrade will allow for the removal of the Paducah Site’s four massive switchyards from the United States National Power Grid. That’s right, the Paducah Site used so much energy and was configured in such a way that it is still part of the National Power Grid, which requires many safeguards and securities that are expensive and laborious to maintain. The newly constructed TVA substation will drastically cut operating costs by officially removing it from the National Power Grid.
Implementation of the Record of Decision for Disposition of Depleted Uranium Oxide Conversion Product Generated from Department of Energy’s Inventory of Depleted Uranium at the Paducah Site

On June 5, 2020, the Record of Decision for Disposition of Depleted Uranium Oxide Conversion Product Generated from Department of Energy’s Inventory of Depleted Uranium was released in the Federal Register. DOE has made the decision to disposition depleted uranium oxide (DUO₅) from the Paducah (KY) and Portsmouth (OH) sites, if declared a waste, at one or more of the following disposal sites:

- EnergySolutions, a low-level radioactive waste (LLW) disposal facility near Clive, Utah;
- Waste Control Specialists, LLC., an LLW disposal facility in Andrews, Texas; and
- a DOE-owned LLW disposal facility at the Nevada National Security Site in Nye County, Nevada.

Depleted uranium oxide results from the conversion of depleted uranium hexafluoride (DUF₆), which is a product of the gaseous diffusion process used to enrich uranium. The DUF₆ Conversion Facility at the Paducah site began operation in early 2011, and its function is to convert DUF₆ to depleted uranium oxide, a more stable and less toxic form. Once converted, the DUO₅ could be either reused as feedstock in the future or disposed of. DOE intends to utilize authorized disposal facilities for initial shipments and is planning a pilot project in the next year to ship several railcars containing cylinders of DUO₅ to one of the commercial disposal facilities. If sent for disposal via railway, each gondola railcar will contain up to six cylinders affixed with protective lids.

The Paducah Site’s inventory contains approximately, 512,600 metric tons of DUF₆ in about 42,100 cylinders. There are two types of cylinders, a 10-ton thick-walled cylinder weighing 4,500 pounds (20,000 pound DUF₆ capacity) and a 14-ton thin-walled cylinder weighing 2,600 pounds (28,000 pound DUF₆ capacity). After conversion, each DUO₅ cylinder weighs approximately 12 tons. To date, the Paducah Site has converted approximately 6,700 cylinders of DUF₆ into 6,200 DUO₅ cylinders. Currently, the DOE complex has approximately 730,000 metric tons of unprocessed DUF₆ stored in approximately 60,400 cylinders. Removal of DUF₆/DUO₅ from DOE facilities addresses their commitment to reduce immediate and future risk to workers and the surrounding community.

One Year Anniversary of Magnitude 2.0 Earthquake Near PGDP

Earthquakes occur when two blocks of the earth suddenly slip past one another resulting in ground movement. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) preliminarily reported a 2.4 magnitude earthquake on June 6, 2019 at 6:34 PM. After the initial seismograph data was analyzed by the USGS the earthquake was downgraded to 2.0. The epicenter of the earthquake was located in close proximity, northwest of the Paducah Site at a depth of approximately 1.86 miles below the ground surface. The earthquake was relatively weak with no reported damage to surface structures. Earthquakes that measure less than 2.5 in magnitude are typically not felt by people. The USGS estimates that 900,000 of these low magnitude earthquakes occur annually.
EPA Personnel Changes

Since July 2019, Victor L. Weeks has been preparing to assume the EPA FFA project manager’s role for the Paducah Site, effective on June 26, 2020. Since graduating from college in 1987, he has worked for the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency R4 located in Atlanta, Georgia. Victor’s first EPA assignment was to develop the hazard ranking packages in support of CERCLA National Priorities List proposed listings for several R4 federal facilities. His initial EPA program position was to serve as the Federal Facility Agreement (FFA) project manager overseeing the cleanup for DOE’s Savannah River Site. After five years in that role, Victor was reassigned to serve as the Oak Ridge Reservation FFA project manager. In 1998, he changed EPA career paths to serve as the R4 Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Coordinator, responsible for working with state and local jurisdictions, and industry in process safety management to prevent, minimize, and respond to chemical accidents at industrial operations. More recently, Victor was reassigned back to his original career role as a Remedial Project Manager in overseeing cleanup at DOE facilities.

Julie Corkran, Ph.D., retired on June 30, 2020 after 30 years of combined state and federal service with Ohio EPA, ATSDR and EPA Region 4. Julie served as EPAs Remedial Project Manager and FFA Manager on the Paducah Site for more than five years.

Kentucky Environmental Oversight News is published quarterly by the Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection’s Division of Waste Management. It features information regarding environmental cleanup activities at the DOE Paducah Site and related topics. Additional information is available from:

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