

Economic downturn can be good time to start small company - Business, C1

The Courier-Journal

48 PAGES • A GANNETT NEWSPAPER • LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY www.courier-journal.com MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2001 • 50 CENTS

METRO EDITION

World Series

Game 2
Arizona 4, New York 0
(Arizona leads series 2-0)
Sports, D1

1961 Paducah tests indicated neptunium exposure

■ Ex-safety official at uranium plant said he believed tests showed permissible levels of the dangerous substance.

By JAMES R. CARROLL
The Courier-Journal

WASHINGTON — The man whose job was to protect Paducah uranium plant workers from excessive radiation had evidence from tests conducted in 1961 that some workers had measurable radiation in their bodies from neptunium exposure.

But Richard C. Baker, who headed radiation protection at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant for most of 35 years until he retired in 1986, concluded the findings in urine tests were no cause for alarm.

He said he believed the test results on 21 men reflected recent exposure to permissible levels of neptunium dust at the plant, which processed uranium for nuclear weapons.

Baker also said he was not required by law to calculate how much radiation workers were getting. The Department of Energy ordered such calculations in 1987 "in their great wisdom and ignorance," he said.

His comments are contained in a deposition for a \$10 billion lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court at Paducah against the plant's uranium suppliers and its former operators.

Louisville attorney William McMurry, who is representing current and former plant workers and their families who are the plaintiffs in the case, contends the urine test results on the 21 men revealed neptunium stored in their bodies from long-term exposure to dust levels that were "off the scale."

If the tests had been done properly, McMurry said in an interview, "they would have had to recognize that they were nuking people in there, but they turned their heads in an unscientific way."

Baker's deposition, taken last month, marks the first time the man who was largely responsible for radiation protection at the plant from its first days of operation has discussed in a legal setting the contamination at the Paducah facility.

In September 1999, then-Energy Secretary Bill Richardson went to Paducah to apologize

See 1961 TESTS
Page 5, col. 1, this section

CJ 2001 PGDP test results

Clipped By:



bill9917

Sat, Jan 4, 2020