

Army wants former Harshaw plant workers

Corps of Engineers needs information

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Remember how Uncle Charlie used to bore everyone at the dinner table with stories about the Harshaw Chemical Co. and processing uranium for the atomic bombs that ended World War II?

While the relatives might have tired of the stories, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is all ears. It wants to hear everything Uncle Charlie and anyone else can recall about working at the plant on 1000 Harvard Road along the Cuyahoga River. And not just people who worked there during World War II, but also those em-

ployed there through the late 1950s when the plant stopped working with radioactive materials.

The corps is examining the site to determine the amount of contamination that remains.

"We are looking for any details about their employment," said Bill Kowalewski, corps spokesman. "A guy who worked in the warehouse could tell us how he moved boxes of radioactive material from a train car to a processing building and where the material — and the boxes — went from there. Was waste material drummed up and buried or shipped off site? Did they burn or bury the containment boxes? All these things are important to us."

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Manhattan Project, the federal government's secret atomic production system that produced the bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the war, research continued at the plant under the Atomic Energy Commission.

At its peak during the war, tons of uranium powder once arrived by train. Harshaw workers refined it and then sent it on for more processing at a plant in Tennessee.

Uranium refinement at Harshaw stopped in 1959. All

that remains on the 55-acre site on Harvard Road are empty buildings and radioactive contamination and hazardous-chemical pollution that lie under the surface.

"There's no cause for alarm, certainly no cause for neighbors to worry at all," Kowalewski said. "The Department of Energy standards for contamination have changed and we want to be sure the site meets current standards. The contamination will be in the 55-acre site and only in specific places among those acres."

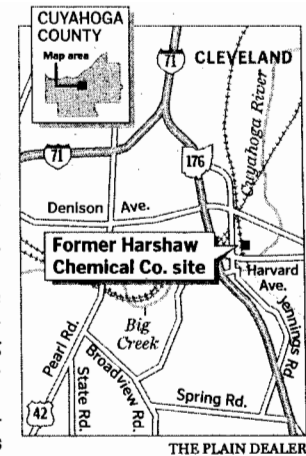
A preliminary study by the corps in 2003 found "no imminent threats to human life," but added that long-term, daily exposure over a 25- to 30-year period could lead to health risks. The study said radioactive uranium

levels were found in buildings, soil and groundwater with the highest concentrations found in the main processing building. They also found evidence of radioactive thorium at the site.

The current owners of the Harshaw site, Chevron and Engelhard Corp., are cooperating and want it cleaned up, Kowalewski said.

The next phase is a more rigorous investigation and that includes information from guys like Uncle Charlie, or even people he talked to if he has passed on.

"We want to talk to the employees themselves, but if someone else feels that they have information about the plant, we'd like to talk to them as well," said Bruce Sanders, spokesman for the corps.



Anyone interested in talking to the Army Corps of Engineers about the Harshaw site is asked to call James Kerr and Associates at 1-866-731-3493.

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