

# DOE officials: Plant cleanup a priority

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U.S. Department of Energy officials were in town Monday to tour the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, and express their appreciation for the community's support of the ongoing cleanup operations there.

While no specific details were given on one of the major concerns of the community - the need for increased funding of the cleanup - the DOE officials assured those attending a private Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce reception the Paducah plant cleanup remains a priority.

The appearance by David Klaus, DOE deputy undersecretary for management and performance, and Mark Whitney, DOE's principal deputy assistant for environmental management, was in response to an invitation extended by community officials in a trip to Washington, D.C., last September.

"I've got to tell you, I was impressed by a couple of things," said Klaus. "I was impressed by the community here and the support you all have for the Department of Energy. I was impressed by the chance to meet with the folks working at the plant ... you can tell when folks working at the plant really care."

The DOE faces significant challenges in its mission to clean up sites across the county, including Paducah.

"The people who worked at these plants made an enormous contribution to this country over a 50-60 year period," Klaus said. "They were absolutely essential to winning the Cold War and promoting peace across the world. We owe them a responsibility to clean up the legacy waste that remains."

The Paducah community has been a "terrific advocate" for cleanup at its site and the rest of the country, Klaus said.

"I can assure you that (cleanup) is a great priority of our secretary and the president."

President Barack Obama's fiscal 2016 budget request includes \$232 million for the Paducah site cleanup.

"Our relationship with the community in Paducah is really critical," said Whitney. "The reason we do what we do in the EM (environmental management) program is for the community, the people in this room, the people that live around our sites. We have a tremendous responsibility. We do not take it lightly."

Whitney said he hoped Monday's visit, "if anything, is viewed as a commitment to the cleanup work in Paducah. Unfortunately, we can't do everything we want to do at the same time. We have 16 sites in 11 states and we have a federal budget that is somewhat constrained. That's the reality we live in.

"I want you to know the Paducah cleanup, the work you do here, is vitally important to us and now that I've seen it and understand it better ... we'll continue to be a champion for it," Whitney said.