

DOE site tours attract visitors from across U.S.

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Staff report



Photo by Will Evans, DOE

Tour guide Steve Christmas of Fluor Federal Services discusses the process to enrich uranium as participants gather in the former plant's main control room.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently completed its first year of public tours at its Paducah Site, welcoming nearly 500 people from 16 states.

"The response to the public tours reflects that our community has an interest in learning about the plant's history and ongoing work," said Jennifer Woodard, Paducah site lead for DOE's Portsmouth/Paducah Project Office (PPPO).

The tours give participants a closer look at the site, which produced enriched uranium for national security purposes before its mission shifted to enriching uranium for the nuclear power industry. The site is undergoing environmental cleanup and deactivation in preparation for decontamination and decommissioning.

Before the tour, visitors view site history videos at West Kentucky Community & Technical College and on the bus ride to the site. The videos explain the plant's importance nationally and its impact on the culture and economy of the region. The tour guide also provides details of the plant, its function, and its facilities.

Many of the visitors are former workers or family members of current or former workers. Toni Stricklin, a real estate agent in Paducah whose son works at the site, visited the site for the first time in September.

"Touring the (Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant) has always been on my bucket list," Stricklin said. "It was a wonderful experience - very educational, informative, and extremely well planned and coordinated."

DOE and its contractors have begun planning for 2017. "We appreciate the feedback we've received from this year's visitors and plan to incorporate improvements in order to have an even more successful program next year," Woodard said.

People interested in touring the Paducah site in 2017 can sign up to receive an email in the spring after dates and registration details are confirmed, by visiting <http://ffspaducah.com/tours>.