

## REGIONAL

### 'Dr. Death' takes the Fifth

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — The inventor of a suicide machine refused to answer questions during a court hearing Tuesday on whether he can have his device back.

The machine was seized by Oakland County authorities after Dr. Jack Kevorkian, who says his friends call him "Dr. Death," helped a 54-year-old woman with Alzheimer's disease inject herself with a fatal dose of an anesthetic and a heart-stopping drug.

Kevorkian, 62, was charged Monday with first-degree murder for his role in the June 4 death of Janet Adkins of Portland, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Michigan has no specific laws against assisting with suicide, but Oakland County Prosecutor Richard Thompson maintained that Kevorkian was the "primary and legal" cause of Adkins' death.

death.

Kevorkian refused to answer any questions when assistant Prosecutor Michael Modelski called him to the stand during the hearing over authorities' request to make permanent a court order forbidding the retired pathologist from using his machine, or others like it.

"On the advice of counsel, I invoke the Fifth Amendment," Kevorkian repeated to each of Modelski's questions, including requests for the doctor to state his name, occupation, education and medical background.

Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Alice L. Gilbert adjourned the hearing until Monday.

If Kevorkian testified in the civil case his right to a fair trial in a criminal case would be jeopardized, said Kevorkian's attorney, Geoffrey Fieger.

### Hanford whistle blower settles in agreement over harassment

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — An engineer who complained she was harassed after raising safety concerns about Hanford nuclear waste storage tanks reached agreement Tuesday with her employer, Westinghouse Hanford Co.

Inez Austin agreed to withdraw a complaint she filed with the U.S. Department of Labor. She also agreed not to participate in any legal action against Westinghouse arising from the case.

Westinghouse is the main government contractor at the 560-square-mile Hanford nuclear reservation in southcentral Washington.

Austin complained to reporters recently that she had been harassed by her supervisors after warning last summer that removing liquids from two nuclear waste storage tanks could cause the contents to explode.

A separate, subsequent General Accounting Office report said too little was known about the explosive potential of the tanks and the consequences of an explosion.

Under Tuesday's agreement, the company admitted no wrongdoing. Austin remains a Westinghouse employee.

Roger Nichols, Westinghouse Hanford president, said compa-

ny Vice President Michael Korenko has been appointed to review her allegations.

"In no way should today's agreement be construed as judging the merits of this case," Nichols said. "Dr. Korenko's job is to determine the facts of this case."

The company pursued the agreement in order to encourage whistle blowers to come forward, Nichols said.

"Now is not the time to send our employees the wrong messages about our desire to have them raise concerns," Nichols said.

Austin could not be reached for comment Tuesday at work or at home. Calls to her home phone were answered by a recorded message.

Nichols said Westinghouse Hanford and the reservation are in transition from making plutonium for nuclear weapons to waste management and environmental restoration of the huge site.

"We need our employees to uncover problems of the past and to bring safety, environmental and quality concerns to management's attention," Nichols said.

Despite the allegations, Nichols said safety was never compromised at the tank farms. He said the liquid removal issue was already being reviewed by a team of experts at the time Austin's concerns were raised and has been satisfactorily resolved.

Under terms of the agreement:

- A letter of reprimand will be removed from Austin's file. She can also review all her company files and remove any derogatory information from the incident.

Her latest performance appraisal, the lowest she had ever received, will be upgraded.

- She will be offered a choice of new transfer assignments

within the company, and she will get a pay increase and overtime.

- She will receive one month of paid time off beginning Wednesday.

- Her \$5,000 in legal fees will be paid by the company.

Six weeks ago Energy Secretary James Watkins toured Hanford and promised whistle blowers would be protected and rewarded. In November, Westinghouse Hanford publicly issued guidelines for protecting whistle blowers.

Austin's concerns were about tanks that were revealed last year to contain ferrocyanide, which could explode if internal tank temperatures top 400 degrees Fahrenheit. The chemical was added in the 1950s to concentrate the tank liquids.

Under a cleanup agreement reached between the state and the federal government, tank liquids are being gradually pumped out.

Last summer Austin refused to authorize the pumping of two of the tanks containing ferrocyanide, said her lawyer Tom Carpenter.

Austin, a Hanford employee since 1979, feared that removing liquids could cause the internal temperatures to rise, possibly to dangerous levels, Carpenter has said.

Fifteen of the ferrocyanide tanks have been pumped in the past without incident, company spokesman John Burk has said.

After arguing with supervisors over her refusal, Austin contended that her workload was sharply reduced. She was also told by a company official to see a psychologist, failed to receive work mail and was moved to an unattractive office in a trailer, Carpenter said.

Carpenter said Austin's recent job evaluation was "clearly retaliatory."



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