

The Disposition of Surplus Facilities at SRS

Born amid Cold War tensions, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) played a critical role in our country's national security strategy for more than 40 years.

Due to changes in missions, however, many SRS facilities are no longer needed to produce or process nuclear materials. This situation poses a challenge for SRS to place and maintain these facilities in a safe, low cost condition until they can be safely disposed.

SRS has approximately 200 structures identified as surplus; another 20 may be declared surplus within the next five years. These facilities range in size and complexity from the five large nuclear reactors to scores of small storage buildings. Many SRS facilities have underground structures like basements, storage tanks and piping that require a large amount of digging to be reached. Some even tower over one hundred feet high. Since these facilities are generally located within one of the Site's nuclear industrial areas, they may be surrounded by other buildings that are occupied or are still being used; demolishing them can be extremely difficult.

What Is Facility Disposition?

Disposition is the process that begins once the DOE decides a facility is no longer needed to support defense, research, or other program missions and declares it as surplus. Many of the facility's systems and components may remain operational to support activities throughout the disposition process.

The facility disposition process is divided into four activities:

Shutdown/Transition, which is the process of terminating operations in a controlled manner and the planning for remaining disposition activities.

Deactivation, which places a facility in a stable and known configuration by removing the chemical and radioactive materials, shutting down or mothballing the facility equipment and mitigating hazards.

Safe Storage, which is a dormant period involving only Surveillance and Maintenance (S&M)* of the facility to ensure safety of the worker, the public and the environment.

Decommissioning, which results in the facility's being in its final end state whether that involves dismantlement, decontamination, or some other activity such that the land is available for either unrestricted use or for limited applications.

*S&M activities are performed during the entire disposition process to ensure all structures, systems and materials are monitored adequately to ensure a safe configuration is maintained.

Are these surplus facilities safe?

Despite the complexity of the facilities and the nature of the hazards, SRS continues to safely manage the disposition of its surplus facilities through its Inactive Facility Risk Management Program.

The immediate goal is to remove hazardous materials from these surplus facilities and process or store them under safe and stable conditions. The SRS continues to seek opportunities to reuse these facilities for mission-related activities as well as for other industrial uses. The SRS will continue a S&M program that keeps a watchful eye over each facility to ensure it does not deteriorate to such a point that it becomes dangerous to workers or it threatens the public and environment with a release of hazardous materials.