

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS BEGINS TEST OF PAPER AS ALTERNATIVE FUEL SOURCE

AIKEN, S.C. (September 11, 2003) – The Savannah River Site has begun a year-long test of a cost-effective new source of heating fuel that cuts the site’s coal usage while reducing emissions and decreasing the amount of paper trash sent to the landfill.

The Site has traditionally used coal in its A-Area steam plant boiler to provide steam for heating and process support for the Savannah River Technology Center and other A-Area buildings. The steam plant has now begun testing a new way of operating, using fuel that is a mixture of approximately 70 percent coal and 30 percent pellets made from compressed recycled paper and cardboard.

The Site Utilities Department conducted lengthy preliminary tests to verify that emissions from the steam plant using this new fuel mixture would be well within the state’s clean air guidelines for incinerators. As a result, the Site received permission from South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to use the new fuel for one year to verify that the pelletized paper fuel will have a uniform consistency. Showing that the pelletized paper fuel is made from uniform materials that do not include materials that might cause unacceptable emissions will provide confidence that this fuel can become part of routine operations for SRS boilers.

The advantages of the mixed fuel are numerous, according to Site Utilities Department Manager Tom Thome, beginning with the reduced impact on the environment. “Emissions from burning paper are lower than those from coal, so that’s a big positive right there,” he says. “Plus, we’re burning less fossil fuel and replacing it with renewable fuels. Using renewable fuel also reduces the amount of new carbon dioxide produced by the steam plant, and produces less ash, thus reducing landfill requirements even further.”

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The new fuel also brings economic advantages, he says. "Burning the trash paper, rather than burying it in a landfill, reduces the Site's waste disposal costs and reduces the amount of coal the Site must purchase."

The Site's Process Engineered Fuel Facility turns the Site's recyclable paper products (office paper, cardboard, etc.) into pellets for use in the steam plant. First, it shreds the paper and cardboard, and then forms it into dense pellets. The pellets and the coal are then fed together into the boilers. To begin the year-long test, the facility produced over three tons of the pelletized fuel, mixed it with coal and loaded it into the hopper that feeds the boiler. By the end of the week, the boiler was burning the mixed fuel – something the site's utilities personnel hope is a routine operation for years to come.

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