

NEWS from

The Savannah River Site



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For immediate release

A/M AREA SURPASSES FOUR BILLION GALLON CLEANUP MARK AT SRS

AIKEN, S.C., (Jan. 23) – The Savannah River Site continues to make major strides in environmental restoration by expediting its cleanup efforts. In mid-January A/M Area noted another milestone, surpassing the four-billion-gallon mark in groundwater cleanup.

“Four billion gallons poured on a football field would make a column of water a mile and three-quarters high,” said Chris Bergren, project manager over the area.

The A/M Area houses laboratories, administration buildings and facilities where fuel target assemblies were manufactured and degreased. Chlorinated industrial solvents were the primary degreasing materials. During the early days of site operations, the practice of putting chlorinated industrial solvents into earthen basins was considered acceptable. However, it is unsatisfactory by today’s environmental standards and stricter regulations.

These solvents are also referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which contain carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, chlorine and other elements. They are called ‘volatile’ because they evaporate quickly.

The primary A/M Area groundwater treatment technology employed is air stripping, commonly referred to as pump and treat. Air stripping works by pumping contaminated groundwater to the surface and up the top of a 70-foot vertical column.

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Then, as the water cascades downward through the column, air that has been forced upward through the column mixes with the water, causing the water's contaminants to vaporize out of the liquid stream. The cleaned water continues to flow downward and is piped to a regulated outfall.

Basic air stripping technology is not foreseen as the final solution to remediating A/M Area's contaminated plume. Environmental restoration officials are constantly looking for more efficient cleanup methods. A balanced mix of very aggressive to passive technologies is used to attack the entire contaminated groundwater plume.

Aggressive technologies, which generally are more costly to operate, are employed at the core of the plume where large amounts of VOCs can be destroyed. Passive (less treatment) remediation technologies are used at the fringes of the plume to cost effectively remove the lower concentrations of the contamination.

The most recently deployed groundwater treatment technology that will boost A/M Area remediation is Dynamic Underground Stripping. According to Jim Kupar, project technical lead, this process uses steam and oxygen to attack concentrated areas of solvent contamination and therefore eliminate sources of contamination in a very short time and reduce overall remediation time by many years.

Continuous deployment of modern technologies along with increased remediation capacity is critical to successful groundwater cleanup at SRS. The site strives to identify and deploy new technologies by sharing experience and data with other similar programs in the U.S. and around the world.

Westinghouse Savannah River Company and its partners manage and operate the SRS for the Department of Energy.

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