

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



Media Contact: Dean Campbell
(803) 725-5481

For Immediate Release

SRS DEFENSE WASTE PROCESSING FACILITY LEADS WORLD BY PRODUCING FIVE MILLION POUNDS OF GLASSIFIED RADIOACTIVE WASTE

AIKEN, S.C. (May 13) - The Savannah River Site's Defense Waste Processing Facility, which immobilizes high-level liquid radioactive waste by turning it into glass, just poured its five millionth pound of glassified waste.

The facility, which achieved the goal during the weekend, leads the world in pouring environmentally acceptable borosilicate glassified waste. Last year, the facility marked the fifth consecutive year that it met or exceeded its production goals.

DWPF, the largest waste vitrification plant of its kind in the world, poured just over 300,000 pounds of nonradioactive glass in testing before it began pouring the actual radioactive glass. That means the facility has poured 5.3 million pounds of glass total.

Stephen F. Piccolo, Westinghouse Savannah River Company's High Level Waste Division vice president and general manager, said employees continue to do an excellent job in preparing waste for permanent disposal.

"While we've been running this facility in radioactive operations for six years, we have not allowed our work to become 'routine.' Our employees continue to focus on safety, our first priority, to meet our mission," Piccolo said. "I am proud that the high-level waste team has been able to accomplish this outstanding milestone. It has taken a great deal of teamwork that cuts across the site and our many organizations."

In addition, the plant and equipment have worked well and has had constant technically innovative improvements along the way to safely expand the melter system's two-year design life to nearly eight years so far.

(more)

The remotely operated melter, where the waste is mixed with frit (fine glass particles) and heated to 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit, was placed in service in 1994 for non-radioactive demonstration of the vitrification process. It has been in continuous service due to innovative engineering modifications and maintenance techniques developed by a team of SRS personnel, including the Savannah River Technology Center, in contact with other glass vendors and academic institutions.

For example, a specially designed insert was developed to fit into the melter pour spout. The heated glassified waste flows through the insert, extending the life of the original pour spout.

Since radioactive operations began in March 1996 at DWPF, almost 1,300 canisters have been poured. It is expected to take 17 to 25 years to turn the entire site inventory of high-level waste into glass.

SRS is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and operated by a team of companies led by WSRC.

WSRC-02-026