

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



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For Immediate Release

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

AIKEN, S.C., (January 3) - The Savannah River Site's Defense Waste Processing Facility, which immobilizes high-level liquid radioactive waste by turning it into glass, now leads the world in pouring environmentally acceptable borosilicate glassified waste.

The facility, the largest of its kind in the world, poured its four millionth pound of radioactive defense glassified waste on New Year's Day. No where else in the world has this quantity been achieved from one facility, marking a significant milestone in stabilizing the waste. The facility also poured just over 300,000 pounds of nonradioactive glass in testing before it began glassifying the actual radioactive glass. That means the facility has poured 4.3 million pounds of glass total.

Stephen F. Piccolo, High Level Waste Division deputy 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 almost five 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 design life.

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The remotely operated melter, where the waste is mixed with frit 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 instead of the pour spout, extending the life of the original pour spout.

Since radioactive operations began in March 1996 at DWPF, more than 1,000 canisters have been poured. It is expected to take 20 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 the Westinghouse Savannah River Company.

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