

NEWS from The Savannah River Site



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For Immediate Release

NEW FACILITY BEGINS OPERATIONS IN SRS'S HB LINE

AIKEN, S.C., November 26 – As part of ongoing material stabilization efforts, SRS this week started up a new operation in its HB Line facility.

The new operation will take existing plutonium and neptunium liquid solutions, and convert them into a more stable powder form. The powder will be transferred to another facility at SRS for storage and eventual disposition.

The startup occurred more than a month ahead of schedule. The site's stabilization and cleanup efforts remain ahead of its commitments to the Department of Energy and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board.

HB Line, located in the site's H Area, was built in the early 1980s in three phases, according to Facility Manager Dave Grimm. The Scrap Recovery operation, the first to be completed, has been operating routinely as part of the ongoing stabilization of legacy materials. It dissolves residues from previous Cold War-related operations from around the DOE complex.

The Plutonium-238 Oxide operation, the last to be completed, produced fuel for the NASA Cassini mission in the mid-1990s.

The Plutonium/Neptunium Oxide operation was built around the same time as the other two, but it had never run – until Monday, Nov. 26. It is expected to run for three years stabilizing Pu solutions, and begin neptunium stabilization in 2005, Grimm says.

“This team met and overcame some substantial obstacles to bring this part of the facility into operation for the first time,” says Grimm. “The entire division and support organizations really pulled together to make this happen. It was a great team effort.”

“Starting up a new nuclear operation inside an existing building is a unique challenge,” says Nuclear Materials Management Division Vice President and General Manager Bill Johnson. “It’s a challenge we have to regularly meet, though, as we reconfigure and make new uses of our existing facilities. I’m very proud of the HB Line team and all those throughout NMMD and other supporting WSRC organizations, whose flexibility and dedication to safe, disciplined operations resulted in this important milestone.”

SRS is owned by DOE and operated by a team of companies led by WSRC.

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