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For Immediate Release

SCDHEC Approves SRPPF Air Quality Construction Permit

AIKEN, S.C., (September 5, 2023) – Another milestone has been achieved towards beginning construction on the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) at the Savannah River Site (SRS). SRPPF is a key component of the Site’s plutonium pit production mission, which the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has identified as national priority. Following a multi-year effort led by the Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Environmental Stewardship, Safety, Health, Quality and Waste Management (ESSHQ&WM) group, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) issued an Air Quality Construction Permit on August 10.

Established by Congress, the Clean Air Act requires facilities whose emissions meet or exceed an established threshold to receive permits from the government before they initiate construction. The dismantlement and removal (D&R) phase at the SRPPF Main Process Building (MPB) began in January 2023, during which construction and craft employees hired through local trade unions are dismantling and removing commodities projected for reuse from the former Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility. Now that the permit has been issued, MPB site preparation and construction activities, including installation of permanent utilities and removal of walls, are officially authorized by SCDHEC to begin.

According to Beth Connell, NCP Environmental Compliance & Waste Management Manager, the process of obtaining the permit was a “multi-year, phased approach.” Connell, NCP Environmental Permitting Manager Michele Wilson and Air Permitting Expert Brent Blunt worked closely with SCDHEC, as well as the SRPPF design and construction teams, staying on top of new developments and design changes to keep all parties informed. In addition to the SRPPF Construction Permit, the group previously obtained two Construction Air Permit exemptions to allow certain activities to begin in the Training and Operations Center (TOC) and the Machining Training Center (MTC).

“An incredible amount of work went in behind the scenes before the review process could even happen,” Connell said. “There was a tremendous amount of collaborative dialogue.”

[PHOTO BELOW]



Aerial view of the SRPPF Main Process Building and supporting facilities

The original project schedule had the Air Quality Construction Permit issuance calculated for 2024; however, the team worked diligently to accelerate that timeline, obtaining the permit two weeks ahead of the revised target date of September 1.

“The Site has a long history of working with our state regulators and key stakeholders, keeping them informed from the start of any proposed new construction and projects at SRS,” said Wilson. “This cooperation enabled us to brief SCDHEC during permit development to ensure our application provided them all the information they needed to issue a timely Air Quality Construction Permit, while meeting the security needs of the project.”

“The Environmental group has done a fantastic job demonstrating the Site’s commitment to environmental stewardship during all stages of the SRPPF project,” said Rick Sprague, SRNS Senior Vice President, Environment, Safety, Health and Quality (ESH&Q). “I congratulate our team on achieving this milestone ahead of schedule and for consistently illustrating their dedication to working safely and collaboratively.”

SRPPF is part of NNSA's two-site strategy between SRS and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) to produce the plutonium pits needed for restoring the nation's nuclear weapons modernization program capabilities. SRS will be required to produce a minimum of 50 war reserve (WR) pits per year (ppy), while LANL will be required to produce 30 WR ppy.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor Corporation-led company with Newport News Nuclear, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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