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For Immediate Release

## **SRS BEGINS CLEANING OUTSIDE OF UNDERGROUND WASTE TANKS**

AIKEN, S.C. (March 3, 2009) – A remote-controlled device began earlier this month cleaning radioactive waste tank annulus space in F Tank Farm, a first in the DOE Complex.

The waste tanks that have an annulus are built to have a-cup-and-saucer arrangement, with the annulus area serving as the saucer with five-foot-tall walls. The arrangement is also encapsulated by concrete and steel walls. Over time, some tanks had small leaks that occurred – none of which escaped into the environment. Releases to the environment are stopped after salt waste material forms a salt nodule on the wall. However, in some cases the waste material leaked into the annulus, where it was trapped. The annulus serves as a barrier to keep the waste from the environment.

WSRC, which manages the Liquid Waste contract for DOE, is embarking on cleaning waste from the Tank 6 annulus space and tank's walls. Once it is finished with Tank 6, it will be used on Tank 5. The work on both tanks is scheduled to be completed in the next few months.

“To properly empty and close waste tanks, we want to safely remove as much waste as practical,” said Terrel Spears, Assistant Manager for Waste Disposition Project, DOE-Savannah River Operations Office. “I’m pleased we have been able to take another significant step in this process.”

The robotic device that will be used to clean the annulus is known as a wall-crawler. It has been modified to clean the area. The new wall crawler is equipped with a brush and nozzle assembly, as well as a video camera. In the cleaning process, when workers see a salt nodule on the wall of an empty tank, the crawler can pressure-spray water on the area and brush clean the leak site.

The crawler's work will allow the salt waste material in the annulus and from the wall to be flushed out and put back into the waste tank. From there, it can be pumped to other tanks for disposition.

“Using the wall crawler in an innovative manner demonstrates our employees’ ability to find ways to deliver results,” said WSRC Executive Vice President Dave Olson. “This work underscores our commitment to risk reduction of legacy radioactive liquid waste.”

The current use of the wall crawler is to inspect waste tank walls for potential leak sites as part of the Site's tank monitoring program. The magnetic crawler hugs the tank wall and beams closed-circuit television shots of the walls as it moves along, controlled remotely by workers.

### **The WSRC Team:**

Washington Savannah River Company LLC • Bechtel Savannah River, Inc. • BNG America Savannah River Corporation  
BWXT Savannah River Company • CH2 Savannah River Company

When the crawler completes its work in one tank, it can be decontaminated and reused in other tanks.

The crawler is a commercial product that was modified by the Savannah River National Laboratory for use on SRS waste tanks.

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