

For Immediate Release
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SRR achieves milestone in waste tank removal

AIKEN, S.C. (May 2, 2011) – The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Savannah River Remediation (SRR) LCC, the Liquid Waste contractor for the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) at the Savannah River Site (SRS), achieved a major milestone by completing Bulk Waste Removal Efforts on Tank 11. This is the third tank to complete Bulk Waste Removal Efforts since SRR took over the contract in July 2009.

Tank 11 is one of 12 Type I tanks that are the oldest tanks at SRS. These tanks were not constructed with full secondary containment and are, therefore, the focus of SRR's bulk waste removal efforts and tank operational closure program.

SRR's efforts to date have resulted in the removal of 92 percent of the sludge waste from this 750,000 gallon capacity radioactive waste tank five months ahead of schedule. The sludge is the most difficult fraction of the waste to remove because it does not dissolve in water, is very thick, like axle grease, and it contains the bulk of the most long-lived radionuclides.

The significant reduction in waste is not the end of the cleaning process for Tank 11, but it does meet the Bulk Waste Removal Effort Federal Facility Act schedule date of September 30, 2011.

The next step for Tank 11 is to have four new mixer pumps installed to start the heel (residual waste at the bottom of the tank) removal process that will include vigorous mixing, water blasting and chemical dissolution of the waste.

Terrel Spears, Assistant Manager for Waste Disposition Project, DOE-Savannah River Operations Office, commended SRR on meeting the Federal Facility Act schedule while continuing to demonstrate that the tank operational closure process is working well at SRS.

"SRR is safely meeting its milestones and contract commitments. It is one of the Department's priorities to empty and operationally close SRS tanks," Spears said.

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This milestone is another step in the SRR operational mission of closing 22 of the Site's oldest tanks by 2018. For the first time in SRS history, there are 15 tanks in the closure process.

Dave Olson, SRR President and Project Manager, commended the team for safely exceeding the schedule.

"Safely removing millions of gallons of waste from a tank takes dedication and teamwork, and I am impressed and proud of how our employees work together for the common goal of emptying this tank to meet the milestone commitment," said Olson.

Safely completing bulk waste removal efforts, then removing as much of the residual waste as practicable through various technologies and techniques involve many intricate steps. DOE and regulators then carefully review what residual waste may be left in the tanks. Once they give their approval that the tanks are ready for closure, the tanks can be filled with grout, a cement-like material created especially for these waste tanks. This grouting process permanently seals the tanks from future use while minimizing the migration of residual contaminants into the environment.

Mark Hasty, SRR Waste Removal and Tank Closure Manager, said employees understand how important their work is to SRS and the local area.

"Removing waste from these aging waste tanks is a job we take seriously," Hasty said. "Our employees have done a great job to safely reach this important milestone. I am proud of them - the work they do is hazardous and difficult."

Savannah River Site is owned by U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). SRR is the Liquid Waste contractor at SRS for DOE, and is composed of personnel from a team of companies led by URS with partners Bechtel National, CH2M Hill and Babcock & Wilcox. Critical subcontractors for the contract are AREVA, Energy Solutions and URS Safety Management Solutions.

SRR-11-020