

News from the Savannah River Site

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For Immediate Release

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SRS Salt Waste Processing Reaches 5-Million Gallon Milestone

AIKEN, S.C. (March 11, 2015) – The Savannah River Site (SRS) has just reached another significant milestone by processing five million gallons of salt waste through its Interim Salt Disposition Process.

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) liquid waste contractor is Savannah River Remediation (SRR), which operates the salt waste processing facilities, as well as the other SRS facilities that disposition radioactive liquid waste. SRR's contract also calls for operationally closing waste tanks.

The salt waste processing milestone was reached in February, when the five millionth gallon was processed through the Actinide Removal Process (ARP) and Modular Caustic Side Solvent Extraction Unit (MCU). The ARP and MCU work as an integrated system to remove nearly all of the radioactive isotopes from the salt waste portion of the SRS's radioactive waste in storage tanks. ARP/MCU began radioactive operations in April 2008.

The radioactive isotopes removed by ARP/MCU are primarily cesium, strontium and actinides. These isotopes are transferred to the Defense Waste Processing Facility, where it is blended with a borosilicate frit and melted to form a molten glass mixture that is poured in stainless steel canisters, which are stored at SRS awaiting permanent storage.

The remaining decontaminated salt solution from salt waste processing is transferred to the Saltstone facilities for disposition.

Achieving this milestone continues to prove the effectiveness of salt waste processing at SRS, according to Jim Folk, DOE-Savannah River Acting Assistant Manager for Waste Disposition.

"I congratulate SRR for reaching this high-water mark," Folk said. "Processing salt waste is essential for us and our mission to close tanks. The salt processing technologies utilized have proven very effective in removing the radioactive constituents from salt waste and reducing curies remaining in the State of South Carolina."

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Salt Processing Milestone

Stuart MacVean, SRR President and Project Manager, said salt waste constitutes about 90 percent of the total waste inventory stored in the two Site tank farms, and the removal and processing of the waste is key in SRR achieving its mission to disposition waste and close tanks.

“The milestone demonstrates the safe and continuous operations of a key component in the waste removal process at SRS,” MacVean said.

During the past year, the ARP and MCU facilities underwent facility upgrades and process improvements designed to extend their operational lives and achieve greater performance and processing totals. The Interim Salt Disposition Process provides operational experience that will be used in the Salt Waste Processing Facility, currently under construction.

SRS is owned by DOE. The SRS Liquid Waste contract is managed by SRR, which is composed of a team of companies led by AECOM with partners Bechtel National, CH2M HILL and Babcock & Wilcox. Critical subcontractors for the contract are AREVA, EnergySolutions and URS Professional Solutions.

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