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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS Liquid Waste Team Reduces Risk, Cost With Spare Equipment Rebuilds

AIKEN, S.C. (July 28, 2022) – The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management (EM) is reducing radiological exposure, reducing costs, and minimizing facility downtime at the Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) at the Savannah River Site (SRS) by using existing facilities to rebuild critical equipment onsite.

SWPF is key to processing the majority of tank waste at SRS. Treating 4 million gallons of tank waste at the site is an EM 2022 priority.

Savannah River Mission Completion (SRMC), the SRS liquid waste contractor, optimized how SWPF contactors and manipulators are maintained. SWPF uses centrifugal contactors in the solvent extraction process, and the SWPF laboratory uses manipulators to handle process samples and equipment within its radioactive cell. Both contactors and manipulators require periodic maintenance and rebuilding.

SRMC has improved the repair process by packaging and transporting the used equipment to existing onsite facilities to decontaminate and rebuild them, producing functional spares.

The contactors are now being decontaminated and rebuilt in the 299-H facility, which was used historically to decontaminate and rebuild similar contactors from the previous interim salt processing facility. The manipulators are now being rebuilt at the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) manipulator shop, which is used to decontaminate and rebuild similar manipulators used at DWPF.

SRMC President and Program Manager Dave Olson said rethinking how critical SWPF equipment is maintained is a sign of a continuous improvement mindset.

"It was an easy decision to use existing decontamination facilities instead of creating a duplicate capability inside the Salt Waste Processing Facility," Olson said. "Not only does it reflect our focus on cost savings, it demonstrates our teamwork since the repairs are done by experienced staff from SWPF and the repair facilities at DWPF and 299-H."

Using refurbished spare contactors and manipulators instead of buying brand-new is a significant cost savings for EM, according to Jim Folk, DOE-Savannah River assistant manager for waste disposition.

"DOE is committed to creating solutions that reduce risk, promote efficiency, and incorporate lessons learned, all while maintaining good stewardship for taxpayers," Folk said. "Minimizing facility downtime by having available rebuilt spare equipment means we can stay focused on completing the Savannah River Site liquid waste mission."



A worker replaces a manipulator arm at the Salt Waste Processing Facility.