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For Immediate Release

Weapon Intern Program Participants Contribute to National Security Mission

AIKEN, S.C., (October 25, 2023) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employees were recently selected to participate in the Weapon Intern Program (WIP), an 11-month residential educational program hosted by Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) Engineers Keith Abrahamson and Quentin Price became the latest participants from the Savannah River Site (SRS) selected for the prestigious leadership development program whose mission is to prepare future generations of experts in nuclear weapons stewardship.



WIP participants Keith Abrahamson, Quentin Price and Emily Moody

The only program of its kind within the Nuclear Security Enterprise (NSE), the WIP offers participants an in-depth, Enterprise-wide exposure to all aspects of the nuclear deterrent. Over the past 25 years, WIP has graduated over 500 participants from multiple organizations, including the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National

Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Only 24 participants are accepted into the program each year. Of the 24 accepted, 12 are external to Sandia, allowing for one to two candidates to participate from SRS each year.

The WIP includes extensive classroom instruction from subject matter experts on a variety of nuclear weapon topics. Classroom instruction is reinforced with Site visits across the NSE, a variety of DOD facilities and historical sites. During their time in the program, WIP participants also complete class projects, such as weapon system program reviews, and a final project in which they are embedded in a Sandia working group. Those returning to SRS provide insight into nuclear weapon production and leverage established connections to support the SRPPF and Savannah River Tritium Enterprise (SRTE) missions.

“It is an incredible honor to represent SRS in the Weapon Intern Program,” said Lisa Lee, SRPPF Senior Engineer, who coordinates the SRPPF application and selection processes and also helps plan the annual WIP SRS site visit. “WIP is well known throughout the NSE, and as a result, draws a considerable amount of interest throughout the nuclear weapon complex. Many of the candidates selected for WIP have 10-plus years of nuclear experience and are considered experts in their fields.”

Todd Woodsmall, SRTE Senior Engineer, who was involved in the SRS selection process, agreed. “Participation in the WIP is a big deal because it represents a significant investment on the part of both SRNS and the immediate organization from which each participant comes,” he said. “Each intern not only goes to learn, but he or she takes with them their knowledge of SRS facilities and capabilities to help inform other Sites’ interns about our role and contribution to the nuclear weapon complex. They are ambassadors for SRS and their home organization.”

Abrahamson and Price started the program in mid-September. “I have always heard of the program described as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, a distillation of decades of knowledge to develop the next generation of nuclear weaponeers,” said Price. “The intent of the program is to develop technical leadership in individuals while fostering relationships across the NSE. Both of these will help me better serve to integrate SRPPF into its nascent role in the NSE.”

“This is a great opportunity to understand the weapon systems, delivery platforms and – just as important – the purpose of the NSE and how SRS missions ensure our national and global security,” said Abrahamson.

Emily Moody, SRTE Engineer, just returned to SRS after graduating from the most recent WIP class. “I definitely have a more thorough understanding of how what we do in Tritium fits into and affects the rest of the complex and the DoD,” she said. “I am very proud to be a part of our organization, even more so now than before WIP. The things I learned while doing my final project are invaluable in my understanding of our day-to-day work – how and why we do certain things. My participation in the program exceeded my expectations.”

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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