

For Immediate Release

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SRR Achieves Major Milestone in Removal of Tank Waste

AIKEN, S.C. (October 15, 2010) – By removing 95 percent of the waste from another one-million gallon capacity radioactive waste tank, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Savannah River Remediation LLC (SRR), the liquid waste contractor at the Savannah River Site (SRS), have achieved a significant milestone toward operationally closing waste tanks.

Tank 12 originally contained 729,000 gallons of waste. However, a two-year bulk-waste removal process concluded in August 2010 when SRR completed a series of 10 bulk-waste removal campaigns in the 1.3 million gallon tank. The total volume of waste has now been reduced to only 38,000 gallons. The significant reduction in waste is not the end of the tank cleaning process for Tank 12, but does meet the Bulk Waste Removal Federal Facility Act (FFA) milestone of completing this phase of waste removal by September 30, 2010.

Terrel Spears, Assistant Manager for Waste Disposition Project, DOE-Savannah River Operations Office, commended SRR on meeting the FFA milestone in a timely manner while continuing to demonstrate that the tank closure process is working well at SRS.

“Safely meeting closure milestones is a key measurement in how well SRR is doing in closing waste tanks, meeting contract commitments, and, ultimately, making real ground in the Department’s risk reduction priority to empty and close these waste tanks,” Spears said.

This milestone keeps SRR on track for closing 22 waste tanks by 2017. SRR has, for the first time in the history of SRS, 15 tanks in the tank closure process. One year ago, the company had seven tanks in the closure process.

Jim French, SRR President and Project Manager, said removing hundreds of thousands of gallons of waste takes a team all pulling in the same direction.

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“Our employees continue to impress me with their safe performance, diligence and innovation as we work toward operationally closing 22 waste tanks in eight years,” French said. “It takes quite awhile to remove most of the waste in the tanks, and this milestone caps another important step in the tank closure process.”

Safely closing waste tanks involves an intricate set of steps that include emptying the waste tanks of bulk waste, then removing as much of the residual waste as practical through various technologies and techniques. Once that phase is complete, DOE and regulators carefully review what residual, incidental waste may be left in the tanks, then 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 binding the residual waste into the grout.

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

“Getting waste out of these aging waste tanks is a mission we take seriously,” Hasty said. “It’s hazardous work, and it’s hard work. However, our employees have done a great job to safely reach this important achievement. I am proud of them.”

Tank 12 is a Type I tank, one of the original tanks built at SRS in 1951-1953. Tank 12 was placed into waste storage service in 1956. Type I tanks do not have full secondary containments, are not used to store additional wastes, and are the first type of tanks to be emptied and closed.

Prior to November 2004, Tank 12 had not received liquid additions for about 30 years, and was designated as a “dry” sludge tank. Between November 2004 and January 2005, liquid was added to soften waste in Tank 12 to prepare for waste removal.

SRR is the SRS Liquid Waste contractor, and SRS is owned by DOE. SRR 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.

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