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Consolidation Promotes Improvement in SRS Liquid Waste Program

AIKEN, S.C. (December 19, 2023) – The [Office of Environmental Management](#) (EM) contractor at the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) [Savannah River Site](#) (SRS) continues to make progress integrating two key waste treatment facilities in pursuit of completing the liquid waste mission.

[Savannah River Mission Completion](#) (SRMC) consolidated the control rooms used for operations of two different [SRS liquid waste facilities](#) — the Saltstone Production Facility (SPF) and Effluent Treatment Facility (ETF) — into one location.

SPF treats the decontaminated salt solution (DSS) that comes from the [Salt Waste Processing Facility](#) (SWPF) by mixing it with dry materials to form a grout, which is then poured into [Saltstone Disposal Units](#) to harden into a form safe for permanent onsite disposal. ETF treats low-level radioactive wastewater produced at SRS by removing contaminants to ensure compliance with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act before safely releasing it to the environment.

This consolidation of control rooms supports the organizational integration of SPF and ETF, which were combined last year into one program called End Stream Delivery (ESD). ESD reports to SWPF — the facility processing nearly 90% of the tank waste left in the [SRS Tank Farms](#), a grouping of underground waste tanks. The merger supports the best use of staffing resources and production optimization.

SPF transitioned this year from four-day to 24-7 operations to support the increased DSS output from SWPF, which meant an increase in staffing needed for SPF. In turn, ETF is required to be staffed 24-7 for permitting purposes even though it doesn't process continuously. Several factors, including weather and output from other site facilities, impact ETF's operations schedule.

Combining operations optimizes staffing resources that already exist within the liquid waste program, which saves money that can be used in other critical ways to advance the mission, according to Jim Folk, DOE-Savannah River assistant manager for waste disposition.

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“Consolidating operations of two facilities under one organization is an example of continuous improvement and integration within the liquid waste program,” Folk said. “This effort benefits the acceleration of EM’s [waste tank closure mission](#) by ensuring all facets of the liquid waste system are ready for the high output of decontaminated salt solution from SWPF.”

From a management standpoint, merging the resources of SPF and ETF to create ESD made sense because they are both at the end of the pipe of the liquid waste system, which also lends to the name “end stream,” according to Dave Olson, SRMC president and program manager.

“Both the Saltstone Production and Effluent Treatment facilities provide critical functions for the entire liquid waste system. They are the final disposition of their respective processing streams,” Olson said. “Since End Stream Delivery’s primary role is in support of salt processing, it makes sense to align the two together as ESD under the SWPF project director. This effort, like many others we have undertaken, is focused on aligning our valuable resources to gain the most benefit.”

Under the new control room configuration, all operations for ESD will be controlled from SPF. The shift operations manager will be able to toggle between facility processing using one monitor. ETF will remain staffed with field operators and line management to conduct rounds, monitor processing, etc.

During the reconfiguration, SRMC construction crews made upgrades to the control room, such as new ergonomic workstations and consoles, control switches and printers. To support staffing of both facilities, operators from SPF and ETF are being cross-trained to become dual-qualified at both facilities.



Savannah River Mission Completion President and Project Manager Dave Olson talks with End Stream Delivery (ESD) control room operator Sherri Plunkett in the ESD control room, which has been reconfigured to support operations of two liquid waste facilities at DOE-EM’s Savannah River Site.

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Distributed control system hardware upgrades were made to support operations in the newly consolidated control room for Savannah River Site Liquid Waste End Stream Delivery.