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One-of-a-Kind Vehicle Takes Critical Pit Stop at Savannah River Site

AIKEN, S.C. (May 28, 2024) – The massive, unique vehicle used to transport highly radioactive canisters at the [Savannah River Site](#) (SRS) has completed an important pit stop to ensure continued, reliable movement of the site's [liquid waste mission](#).

The Shielded Canister Transporter (SCT) carries the stainless steel canisters filled with glassified, high-level radioactive waste, one at a time, from the [Defense Waste Processing Facility](#) (DWPF) to nearby Glass Waste Storage Buildings (GWSBs). Inside a GWSB, the transporter lowers each canister into a below-grade concrete vault containing support frames for vertical storage of the canisters. The buildings are for interim storage until a federal repository is ready to receive the canisters.

Measuring more than 18 feet tall and 25 feet long, and weighing 235,000 pounds, the [SCT](#) is a front-wheel-drive vehicle powered by diesel engines. It clocks in at a top speed of around 3 mph.

The U.S. Department of Energy [Office of Environmental Management](#) liquid waste contractor at SRS, Savannah River Mission Completion (SRMC), operates and maintains the SCT.

The recent pit stop included repairing brakes, servicing drive motors and installing eight new rubber tires — each weighing 2,500 pounds. The maintenance took approximately two weeks, but there was no impact to operations since production was paused for a site-wide steam outage so needed facility maintenance could take place.

In its 28 years, the SCT has traveled 1,980 miles between the DWPF and the two GWSBs — a trek equal to 792 laps around the Daytona International Speedway. It has transported more than 4,400 canisters to the GWSBs. DWPF is expected to produce over 8,100 canisters over the life of the project.

Operators also use the SCT to relocate canisters to enable vault modifications for double-stacking canisters in a single storage slot — a [milestone recently completed](#) in GWSB 1 by SRMC.

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The SCT is critical to the SRS liquid waste cleanup process, according to Jim Folk, [DOE-Savannah River](#) assistant manager for waste disposition.

“The Shielded Canister Transporter is the only way the canisters of high-level waste can leave the Defense Waste Processing Facility to be safely stored onsite, and there is not another one like it,” Folk said. “Maintaining reliable operation of the transporter is critical to the highly integrated and interconnected SRS liquid waste system.”

SRMC Chief Operations Officer Wyatt Clark said that SRMC crews continue to take great care of this machine to ensure longevity over the mission.

“All the corrective and preventive maintenance is done by skilled SRMC mechanics,” Clark said. “Because of their diligent work, we are able to ensure reliability of this critical vehicle as we continue to pursue our mission to reduce the risk to people and the environment of the radioactive waste stored at SRS. There is only one Shielded Canister Transporter, and we have to keep it moving.”

Cutline: *At right, a forklift moves a 2,500-pound tire to be installed on the Shielded Canister Transporter, at left, a unique vehicle used to transport stainless steel canisters of glassified high-level waste for storage at the Savannah River Site (SRS). Crews recently completed significant upgrades to keep it operational for the SRS liquid waste mission.*

