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For Immediate Release

SRS reaches milestone in pit production staffing with first class of SRPPF Production Operator Apprentices

AIKEN, S.C., (October 17, 2024) – The Savannah River Site (SRS) recently onboarded five apprentices as part of the inaugural Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) class of Production Operator Apprentices. This development marks a significant milestone in



The first class of onboarded SRPPF Production Operator Apprentices met with leadership from SRNS Pit Production Operations and Programs and the SRS Apprenticeship School at an orientation session held September 3.

staffing the SRPPF facility, which was selected by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) to produce the plutonium pits required to strengthen the Nation's nuclear stockpile.

The [SRS Apprenticeship School](#) was created as an industry partnership with local technical colleges to help build workforce pipelines for various disciplines at SRS. The School's community partners now include Aiken Technical College, Denmark Technical College, Augusta Technical College and economic development agencies like the Lower Savannah Council of Governments and the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization.

According to Patrick Ott, SRNS Apprentice Recruiter/ Apprenticeship Program Lead who oversees the SRPPF Apprenticeship operators through the SRS Apprenticeship School, to be eligible for the program, applicants must have a high school diploma or GED and achieve required scores on the WorkKeys assessment tests.

"Over the years, the Production Operator Apprentice program has been a huge success with nearly 450 graduates," said Ott. "We are especially looking forward to onboarding this new group of SRPPF apprentices as they become part of the SRS mission of helping make the world safer."

Brianna Golphin said she decided to apply for the SRPPF Production Operator position because of the unique opportunity to serve her country. "I am particularly excited about graduating from the program and starting my journey at the SRPPF facility," said Golphin.

"Through this program, I hope to gain comprehensive knowledge and training that will enhance my performance skills, enabling me to become the best production operator at SRPPF. My long-term goal is to build a lasting career with SRPPF."



Erika Baeza-Wisdom, Patrick Schneider and Rodney Walker of SRNS Pit Production Operations and Programs participated in a question-and-answer session with the new SRPPF Production Operator Apprentices.

The eight-month program will allow these students to simultaneously complete their classroom work and on-the-job training by alternating between taking classes at Denmark Technical College (DTC)'s satellite campus, located in the heart of Allendale, South Carolina, and training on-site, while earning a competitive scalable wage. After completing the program at DTC, a Historically Black College and University, participants will have earned a certificate in nuclear fundamentals and will have a portable credential from the Department of Labor. A formal graduation ceremony will be held to commemorate the occasion.

“Onboarding this first class of SRPPF Production Operator Apprentices signifies a major development in our efforts to staff the [pit production mission](#) at SRS,” said Darlene Murdoch, SRNS Senior Vice President NNSA Pit Production Operations and Programs. “Having the right team in place is a crucial factor in successfully delivering on our commitments to strengthen nuclear deterrence. We are thrilled that these students have chosen to join our team and look forward to working with them for many years to come.”

SRPPF is part of NNSA's two-site strategy between SRS and Los Alamos National Laboratory to produce no fewer than 80 war reserve plutonium pits per year to meet national security requirements. The two-site approach will provide an effective, responsive and resilient nuclear weapons infrastructure with the flexibility to adapt to shifting requirements and counter future threats.

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 and HII partnership company, 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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