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Savannah River Site Closes Soil Cleanup System, Saving \$264,000 Annually

AIKEN, S.C., October 14, 2020 – A 12-year cleanup campaign conducted by at the Savannah River Site (SRS) has ended successfully, removing more than 5,000 pounds of chemical solvents from soil and leading to an annual cost savings of \$264,000.

Remediation of the M-Area Inactive Process Sewer Line Operable Unit was completed following a review of recent comprehensive soil sampling results under an agreement with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

“I was pleasantly surprised when we reviewed the latest soil sampling data and pleased to see the solvent levels were much lower than I had expected, far below regulatory requirements,” said John Bradley, an Engineer with the Environmental Compliance and Area Completion Projects (EC&ACP) division at Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the site’s management and operations contractor.

Bradley said the majority of the solvents were removed through the first phase of the project using a high-vacuum soil vapor extraction system requiring large electric pumps, support facilities and monitoring equipment. With discontinued system operation and maintenance, SRS will realize an annual savings of \$264,000.



From left, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions mechanic Todd Cockrell, Engineer John Bradley and Project Manager Joao Cardoso-Neto plan the removal and dismantlement of a high-vacuum soil vapor extraction unit at the Savannah River Site.

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“We met all of our cleanup requirements for this highly successful project, another important step towards remediating the environment at SRS,” said Bradley.

The solvents were used during the Cold War to degrease manufactured metal components, including nuclear reactor fuel.

For decades, workers at several buildings within a portion of SRS known as M Area disposed used solvents into an underground process pipeline that led to a pond-like storage basin. Eventually, these pipes began to leak where they joined four manhole access points. This waste disposal system was used in the 1950s at what was then known as the Savannah River Plant. The site was operated by E.I. Du Pont de Nemours under the management of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, and later, DOE.

“It met their needs at the time and served its purpose. Unfortunately, time and nature prevailed, and the drainage system began to degrade,” said Joao Cardoso-Neto, a Project Manager at SRNS for EC&ACP. “We’ve dedicated an extensive array of resources over the years to help return this section of SRS to natural conditions. That’s an important part of our mission here that we take seriously.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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