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Savannah River Site Completes Significant Computer System Upgrades

AIKEN, S.C. (June 25, 2020) – The liquid waste contractor at the Savannah River Site (SRS) has completed a significant and extensive upgrade to modernize computer systems across the site's liquid waste facilities and maintain cybersecurity industry standards.

In a two-and-a-half-year process, Savannah River Remediation (SRR) upgraded the distributed control system (DCS) to a newer platform and completed an entire computer hardware refresh. The DCS is a specially designed automated control system software with physical control elements located throughout SRS liquid waste facilities, including the Defense Waste Processing Facility, Saltstone, and the Tank Farms. These facilities use processing equipment and instrumentation monitored and controlled by operator personnel via the DCS.

More than 100 physical DCS controllers throughout the facilities were replaced to be compatible with the new, modern software and its processor requirements. The control system software consists of these controllers within each facility, all connected by a communications network. The controllers are used to interface with the facility equipment and instrumentation.

This upgrade was a multimillion-dollar infrastructure improvement effort and a key part in the overall push for upgrading liquid waste systems, according to SRR Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Project Manager Mark Schmitz.

“Planning for and executing infrastructure improvements is key to ensuring reliable operations, all with an eye toward our core value of continuous improvement,” Schmitz said. “This project is one on the many infrastructure projects happening at SRR to ensure liquid waste operations continue to be robust and efficient well into the future.”

Detailed planning went into this project, including use of offline development and test systems beforehand, and involved people from numerous groups within SRR. The upgrade was successfully implemented with minimal facility operational impacts.

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The DCS upgrade was an effort included in SRR's strategic plans to position the liquid waste system to safely operate at higher throughput rates necessary to support the near-term start of operations of the Salt Waste Processing Facility.

Cutline: Janice Sandford, forefront, and other operators are shown in the Defense Waste Processing Facility control room. Savannah River Remediation recently upgraded its control system hardware and software.

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