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For Immediate Release

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Shift Technical Engineer Program Growing to Meet SRS Mission Needs

AIKEN, S.C. (June 22, 2020) – A team of technical engineers is among the many groups growing to support the increased pace of liquid waste operations at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

These engineers with SRS liquid waste contractor Savannah River Remediation (SRR) play a key role in daily operations at liquid waste facilities. As the engineering point of contact on each shift, they work at the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) and Tank Farm facilities, home to the underground waste tanks, helping ensure safe operations, making critical decisions in the field, and resolving emergent plant issues.

There are currently two shift technical engineers per shift covering the Tank Farm facilities and DWPF, and SRR plans to increase it to three per shift to provide staffing for the ramped-up waste processing expected to support the new Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF). SWPF is the EM facility that will process the remaining salt waste at SRS, which makes up about 90 percent of the remaining radioactive waste stored in underground tanks.

“With SWPF coming online, there will be more waste transfers, procedure changes, and emergent issues, and so there is a need to evaluate current shift technical engineer staffing,” SRR President and Project Manager Phil Breidenbach said. “The additional technical engineers will provide increased capability for solving emergent issues on shift without detracting from their primary role, which is to ensure compliance with the safety basis.”

More than 14 engineers have been promoted to shift technical engineer roles over the last four years, and there are currently 25 in the program — nine of which are training. Because of the high level of facility knowledge required, the training and qualification process to become a shift technical engineer is rigorous. It’s a four-part process: prerequisites, additional classroom training, on-the-job training, and a demanding oral examination. It usually takes about a year to become qualified.

“It is important to the overall liquid waste mission and day-to-day operations to identify key people who will perform well as a shift technical engineer and train them early and thoroughly to take on this vital role,” Breidenbach said.

For SRR shift technical engineer Annah Garrison, the best part of the job is the people.

“Working on shift you get to know the people well, and it feels like family,” said Garrison, who has worked in the position in the tank facilities for just over two years. “We look out for each other, and we work together to do the right thing. My shift always challenges me and motivates me to improve. It feels good to work as a team to accomplish something together.”

CUTLINE: *John Mills conducts plant gauge checks at the Defense Waste Processing Facility as part of his job as a shift technical engineer for Savannah River Remediation at the Savannah River Site.*

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