

News from the Savannah River Site

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Starts Spent Nuclear Fuel Campaign

AIKEN, S.C. December 11, 2014 – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) has recently begun a multi-year campaign to process aluminum-clad spent nuclear fuel (SNF) that is currently stored at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

This SNF is referred as Material Test Reactor (MTR) SNF; the fuel is made up of uranium, aluminum, fission products and actinides from both foreign and domestic research reactors. MTR SNF is safely stored in L Basin in wet storage. In H Canyon, the SNF will undergo a chemical process that will separate the uranium and down blend the material into Low Enriched Uranium, a form no longer usable in nuclear weapons. The end-product will be available for use in commercial power reactors, such as those operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to generate electricity. The plutonium and fission products are transferred to the high level waste system where they are ultimately made into a glass waste form at the Defense Waste Processing Facility at SRS.

“For years, H Canyon’s primary mission was to separate uranium from SNF,” said Bill Clifton, SRNS Senior Technical Advisor. “Now, L Basin is beginning to near capacity, so it became necessary for us to start processing SNF again.” This is one of a number of programmatic reasons for processing spent nuclear fuel as described in the Amended Record of Decision issued of March 2013.

“SRNS is authorized to disposition [approximately] 1,000 bundles of MTR SNF and [up to] 200 cores of High Flux Isotope Reactor



H Canyon is the only large scale, remotely operated chemical separations plant operating in the U.S.

(HFIR) SNF in accordance with the Amended Record of Decision signed March 29, 2013” said Allen Gunter, SR Senior Technical Advisor. “Processing of the HFIR cores is scheduled to begin in FY16. This mission will keep the Canyon operational for several years.”

“H Canyon is the only large scale, remotely operated chemical separations plant operating in the U.S.,” Clifton said. “We are taking this SNF and turning it into a product to be used to create clean energy. The uranium is recovered and processed into a form that cannot be used for nuclear weapons, and this mission can only be completed here at SRS.”

SRNS Senior Vice President of Environmental Management Operations Wyatt Clark echoed Clifton, adding, “Not only do we have the technical capability to disposition SNF, we have the experience needed to do it safely.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, 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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