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from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC

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SRNS Employees Save $23.7 Million

Cost and process efficiencies through SRNS Continuous Improvement Program

AIKEN, S.C. – July 11, 2013 – Employees at Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC (SRNS) steadily use a program that has helped save $23.7 million, streamlined processes and rescued threatened facilities at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

During SRNS' 2012 fiscal year (FY), 16 percent of its workforce, or 852 workers, were actively engaged in the Continuous Improvement (CI) program, which focuses on enabling workforces to make process improvements that have a positive impact on customer, employee and corporate interests. Through CI, SRNS finds ways for its employees to work more efficiently and effectively, after determining where the most value can be gained with the least amount of waste. Eliminating waste, or non-value-added activities, leads to diverse process efficiencies, improved employee productivity and often, monetary savings.

The $23.7M is comprised of immediate savings, savings related to the avoidance of future costs or man-hours saved from a streamlined process. Man-hours saved are given back to the worker to take on new scope with existing resources. Improvements implemented from a CI project are validated and monitored to determine their true impact on company goals and objectives. In some cases, these savings are recurring over multiple years.

The SRNS Continuous Improvement program reduced the average cycle time to load a TRUPACT-III cask, a container used to safely ship radioactive waste to a DOE site in New Mexico, from 18 hours down to nine hours, saving $500,000 and reaching an important Recovery Act milestone almost a year earlier than originally expected.

According to Cynthia Boler-Melton, SRNS CI Manager, "You truly begin to see how large an impact CI can have when you start to add up all of the savings amassed from different projects throughout the year. Before we knew it, we had saved over $23M in 2012 and that is why it is so important to constantly use and promote CI regardless of your work function."

Projects can range from a group assessing the alternatives to purchasing new ambulances to those with a more significant impact on tax payer dollars, such as CI projects affecting a variety of environmental cleanup programs at SRS.

During the SRNS Transuranic (TRU) waste program, an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project, CI principles were used to create an uninterrupted work flow by reducing waiting, motion and transportation wastes. This reduced the average cycle time to load a TRUPACT-III cask, one type of metal container

used to ship contaminated industrial waste, from 18 hours to about nine hours. With these improvements, it takes 45 man-hours less to load a container. Without the efficiencies gained through the CI program, it is estimated that completing the removal of Cold War TRU waste from SRS would have taken almost a year longer and $500,000 more.

"When H Canyon, a nuclear chemical separations facility (the only operational in the country) was not funded for new missions in FY12, we used the CI process to help reduce costs," said Paul Hunt, SRNS Senior Vice President, Environmental Management Operations. "The results of the CI effort were outstanding with recommendations delivered at an estimated $30M in savings over two years. This way of thinking helped bring our costs down enough to posture the facility for a new mission that essentially saved the facility and many jobs. CI played a key role in this."

Broadly defined, CI is an ongoing effort to improve products, services or processes. CI at SRNS begins with a framework that is process-based, data-driven and results-oriented. Trained CI leaders assess processes for steps and tasks that can be streamlined, automated or eliminated in some cases.

"The hardest part of starting our CI-Lean journey at SRNS was to convince the workforce that CI principles can be applied in a non-manufacturing process. Once they grasped that a 'product' could also be a service or information, they began to apply CI principles to almost every aspect of operations at SRNS," said Boler-Melton. "Equally important as the savings is our zeal to create a workforce culture that readily identifies and eliminates non-value added activities so that SRNS can bring more value to the customer."

SRNS is involved in the local Continuous Improvement community as an active member of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Lean Alliance. The alliance is a group of area companies that share best practices in CI techniques and principles, also known as "Lean," by benchmarking each other's facilities to study and learn how to implement CI tools more effectively and overcome barriers to the CI process.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC, 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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