

News from the Savannah River Site

NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION • AIKEN • SC 29808

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Unneeded plutonium sources successfully transferred from SRS

AIKEN, S.C. (May 14, 2015) – A collection of 26 sealed plutonium-238 sources is now gone from the Savannah River Site, thanks to the efforts of a team of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) personnel and their collaboration with the Off-Site Source Recovery Project (OSRP) at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

The SRNS Tritium Facilities Analytical Laboratory had previously needed these sealed sources as standards for calibrating the equipment used to validate tritium loading operations. In 2013, SRNS personnel demonstrated that Electrical Heat Standards designed by the Savannah River National Laboratory served as well as, if not better than, the plutonium-based standards, clearing the way to eliminate the sources.

“These sources have been safely managed without incident throughout their use at SRS,” said Lee Schifer, SRNS Director of Tritium Operations. “But properly managing plutonium-238 requires significant cost and effort. It just made good sense to find a way to disposition them once they were no longer needed.”

The SRNS Team identified the OSRP, which is sponsored by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), as the appropriate partner for disposition of the sealed sources. Since 1999, OSRP has carried out its mission to remove excess, unwanted, abandoned or orphaned radioactive sealed sources that pose a potential risk to health, safety, and national security. As of December 2014, OSRP had successfully recovered more than 38,000 disused and unwanted radioactive sources from more than 1,100 domestic sites.

Once the SRNS Team had established a contract with OSRP, the sources’ historical documentation was verified, and the sealed sources were successfully packaged with no safety or radiological issues, and shipped off-site.

The removal of the Pu-238 sources from SRS will result in significant cost and risk reductions. The costs for calibration, inventory, and monitoring to ensure that the sealed sources are not posing a safety hazard will no longer be incurred, and the measures to control and account for the sealed sources will no longer be needed.

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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