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For Immediate Release

Control Room Consolidation Improves Liquid Radioactive Waste Operations at SRS

Consolidating and upgrading waste tank control room systems will add efficiencies, save money and enhance safety at the Savannah River Site

AIKEN, S.C. (Sept. 27)—Until recently, Washington Savannah River Company (WSRC) had maintained five separate, process control rooms located throughout an expansive liquid radioactive waste tank storage area, known as H Tank Farm. Phase one of a multi-year effort to consolidate the various functions performed by each of these five into one control room is now complete.

“This new approach, using a state-of-the-art, digital control system will have a big impact on the labor costs needed to operate five widely separated control rooms,” said Wyatt Clark, H Tank Farm Facility Manager, WSRC. “These changes will allow us to support an increasing amount of critical work without increasing control room staffing.

“However, most importantly, conduct of operations, our ability to efficiently and effectively operate the various facility processes, will be greatly streamlined and enhanced with this consolidation and modernization project,” Clark said. “Additionally, replacing 1950s era control systems with this new technology will improve the safety of our workers and reduce future maintenance costs.”

As a result of this change, operators will go from monitoring a static, wall-mounted panel of light bulb illuminated alarm signals, to working at a computer-based work station.

“From a technical perspective, our control room consolidation effort represents a number of ‘firsts’ for the site and the DOE Complex,” said Rich Izard, WSRC Liquid Waste Process Control Engineering Group Manager. “In order to meet project funding and schedule constraints, we had to be resourceful and fully utilize our existing infrastructure, in addition to deploying new technologies judiciously.”

Izard explained that by identifying and using 15 miles of existing, spare fiber optic lines, the project avoided millions of dollars in design and construction costs.

With the completion of phase one, the functions performed by two control rooms have been moved into the 3H Evaporator Facility control room. This phase also provided the infrastructure, fiber networks and new safety panels, needed to allow the control room functions of two new facilities -- scheduled to go on-line in 2007 -- to be monitored and controlled from the one centralized location as well.

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In the past, individual control room operators had a partial view of the H Tank Farm processes with command and control functions being spread out across several control rooms and control systems. Moving to one, highly-integrated control system, located in a single centralized control room, will dramatically improve the efficiency of waste tank operations.

“We are not content just to safely manage the radioactive waste stored in tanks at SRS,” said WSRC Executive Vice President Bill Poulson. “We are being proactive and creative to seek methods to remove the radioactive waste and utilize safe, long-term storage or disposition processes to protect the generations to follow us. Control room consolidation is another important and innovative step towards completing this vital task.”

SRS is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and operated by a team of companies led by the Washington Savannah River Company, a subsidiary of Washington Group International.

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