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SRS Moves Forward With Final Closure of Cold War Reactors

AIKEN, S.C. - With the beginning of a new decade, the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) is moving forward with its decommissioning activities for the SRS Cold War Production Reactors.

The Department approved the construction start of the *in-situ* decommissioning of P and R Reactors. Both reactors' decommissioning totals over $297.5 million and are being accelerated under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding received by SRS.

"The year started on the right note," said Rodrigo "Rod" Rimando, the DOE Federal Project Director for the two projects. "Staff for the Department of Energy and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions worked long and hard to produce a solid performance baseline for the cleanup – a critical step in the decommissioning process. This is an important accomplishment that is allowing us to move forward with these projects."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 (EPA-4) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) also approved the in-situ decommissioning the other reactor facilities at SRS under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

“This decision can be attributed to the hard work of the SRS staff, regulators and interested members of the public,” said Jeffrey M. Allison, manager of the DOE Savannah River Operations Office. “This agreement sets the stage for the closure of robust nuclear facilities at SRS and elsewhere across the DOE complex.”

Under in-situ decommissioning, the majority of each reactor building would remain, with below-ground equipment, open spaces and the reactor vessel permanently sealed in place with a cement-like grout material. The grout will be pumped into each structure up to ground level, filling vessels, voids and spaces in an effort to fully entomb the facility and its components for centuries. Final closure details are determined at the time each individual reactor complex is closed. The closure method is being modeled at the SRS P Reactor, the first of the five SRS reactors to be closed via this process of in-situ decommissioning.

“The collaboration of DOE, SCDHEC, and EPA to work with multiple stakeholders and the public has resulted in this precedent-setting decision. All three agencies have worked hard to engage the community and make this the first final cleanup of a Cold War-era reactor under CERCLA. EPA appreciates all the effort put forth by the community, SCDHEC and DOE to lead the nation in cleanup," said Robert H. Pope, Federal Facilities Agreement Manager for EPA Region 4.

The Savannah River reactor complex produced plutonium, tritium and other special nuclear materials for the Nation. All SRS reactor operations were permanently stopped by 1993, although the C, K and L reactor complexes do continue to serve other missions not associated with nuclear material production.

The selected reactor closure approach is expected to save over one billion dollars compared to traditional demolition methods. DOE and contractor representatives, in conjunction with regulatory personnel, conducted multiple information sessions and public workshops to gather input and comments prior to the precedent-setting decision.

The reactor closure work is being managed by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC, the management and operating contractor for SRS.

Additional information on the Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management and the Savannah River Site, can be found at http://www.em.doe.gov or http://www.srs.gov. For more information about the SRS Recovery Act Project, please visit www.srs.gov/recovery.

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