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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, January 12, 2010

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100th Recovery Act TRU Shipment Leaves SRS for Permanent Disposition

Recovery Act Accelerates TRU Shipment as Part of Site Clean-Up Plan

Aiken, S.C. – Transuranic (TRU) waste leaving the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) by truck in November for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP), near Carlsbad, N.M., marked the 100th shipment for the Recovery Act Project and the 128th shipment for the 2009 calendar year. The milestone brings the Site one shipment closer to final disposition of its inventory of legacy TRU waste.

"This will be the last shipment until early 2010, while WIPP closes to perform yearly preventative maintenance on its equipment. WIPP also limits its transport by trucks around holidays, when travel-related traffic is increased," said Doug Wooldridge, the Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) TRU waste shipping coordinator. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) ships TRU waste to WIPP from all over its complex.

About 30 SRNS employees, many of whom were hired to work on the Recovery Act Project, and inspectors from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the South Carolina Transport Police gathered at the Big Top, the giant opened-ended shelter that serves as an inspection site in SRS' E Area, as the truck left on its 100th Recovery Act and farewell 2009 voyage. The trucks used in the shipments carry three massive transuranic waste transportation containers, known as TRUPACT IIs, approximately 8 feet in diameter and 10 feet high and certified by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Two of the TRUPACT containers in this shipment housed four 55-gallon drums of waste; the third container held 14 55-gallon waste-filled drums.

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TRU waste at SRS typically comprises clothing, tools, rags, debris and other items used during the production of nuclear materials and contaminated with radioactive elements, primarily plutonium.

The Site has made more than 1,000 of these shipments since the SRS program, Ship-to-WIPP, started in 2001. In the last eight years, the Site has safely shipped 28,760 drums offsite.

The work is part of the Recovery Act Project's footprint reduction plan that calls for the acceleration of Site clean-up projects to free more than 50 percent of the Site's land for future reuse. Additionally, SRS plans to ship the waste offsite for disposal or have the waste ready for shipment to WIPP by September 2012 – a full six years earlier than planned.

In preparation for the shipment, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions LLC (SRNS), the management and operations contractor at SRS, inspects old TRU waste containers for items WIPP prohibits from disposal, including liquids and aerosol cans, then repackages and characterizes the waste for final disposal.

“This last shipment for 2009 safely closes our Ship-to-WIPP program for the year,” said Garry Flowers, SRNS president and CEO. “This important clean-up work would not be performed in this accelerated timeframe without Recovery Act funding. It illustrates the DOE commitment to clean up legacy waste sites through safe, permanent disposal.”

Wooldridge is planning for TRU shipping to resume during the first week of January.

For 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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SR-2010-01



The 100th Recovery Act TRU waste shipment prepares to leave SRS.