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SRNS Safely Completes Facility Modifications to H Canyon

AIKEN, S.C. Aug. 14, 2014 – In five months the Department of Energy’s primary contractor at the Savannah River Site, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), safely completed 16 facility modifications that could have taken up to eight months to complete in support of the continued operation and sustainability of the H Canyon facility.

“Although H Canyon was constructed in the early 1950s, SRNS continues to upgrade the facility to ensure the Canyon is available for future missions and meets the current safety standards for nuclear facilities,” said Paul Hunt, Senior Vice President, EM Operations.

The project consisted of facility modifications and repairs, revision to the safety analysis and reference documents, and implementation activities including procedure changes and training of personnel.

“The job started with defining the scope of work in January,” said Hunt. “Next, Engineering worked 10 hours a day in January and February developing design changes. Our Construction Department started field work in March. They worked six days a week, 10 hours a day until the project was complete in July.”

Construction completed all 16 facility modifications during this time, including sealing abandoned piping, upgrading High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters in the central exhaust system and replacing doors in the exhaust building. This work was heavy construction work involving welding, cutting of pipe, heavy lifting and pouring of concrete. Working conditions were difficult, often requiring workers to



Workers prepare to enter H Canyon for recent facility modifications.

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be dressed in fresh air supplied plastic suits or respirators, and was done in areas of radiological contamination or confined spaces.

Much of the work was done in the heat and humidity of the South Carolina summer, so heat stress on workers was a constant threat.

“With such a complex and hazardous project and with the number of people involved, more pre-planning, mockups and oversight were conducted to ensure the work would be performed safely and without incident,” said Fred Dohse, SRNS Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer. “It is a testament to the safety consciousness of our workforce that so many groups came together and safely completed the project. In this project, like many others in our company, we were truly our brother’s and sister’s keeper.”

H Canyon is the only hardened nuclear chemical separations plant still in operation in the U.S. The building resembles a canyon because the processing areas resemble a gorge in a deep valley between steeply vertical cliffs. The facility is currently dissolving, purifying and preparing for disposal a variety of nuclear materials.

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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