



Contact: DT Townsend
SRNS Public Affairs
803.952.7566
dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov

For Immediate Release

New Recovery Act Waste Prep Process Creates Cost Avoidance of Nearly \$3 Million at SRS

AIKEN, S.C. (Nov. 3, 2010) – Henry Ford, Conrad Hilton, and John Deere, innovators all known for a famous product or service associated with their name. Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employee Jon Bennett has yet to join the ranks of these household names; however, with the invention of the “Bennett Box,” he’s getting closer.

Bennett and his fellow team members work together each business day to complete an important American Recovery and Reinvestment Act cleanup mission at the Savannah River Site (SRS), the processing, packaging and shipping of Transuranic (TRU) waste to the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Waste Isolation Pilot Project in Carlsbad, NM.

Innovative ideas recently provided by Bennett and his team have resulted in a productivity improvement of nearly 300 percent and, therefore, a cost avoidance of approximately \$3 million.

TRU waste is a byproduct of weapons production and nuclear research at SRS, and typically consists of protective gear, tools, residue, debris and other items contaminated with small amounts of radioactive elements.

Much of the TRU waste processed at SRS has to be re-sized to fit into a DOE-approved shipping container designed for the safe transportation of TRU waste on America’s highways. Until recently, this operation was performed using a slow and tedious method involving trial and error in order to modify the size and shape of various contaminated items with tools until Bennett and his team completely filled a TRU waste shipping container. To add to the challenge, the shipping containers are located in another part of H Canyon called the Warm Canyon Cell Cover.

Bennett recently came up with the idea to place an empty, wooden “template” container in the workshop where TRU waste cutting and resizing is performed. The template container exactly matches the dimensions of a standard TRU waste shipping container.

“The creation of this template box, which is now metal, was the result of input from several of my co-workers,” said Jon Bennett, SRNS Radiological Protection Inspector. “Process improvement is usually founded on teamwork.”

Bennett’s teammates further improved this new process by first placing a large sheet of heavy plastic in the template container.

Once filled, the plastic wrapped waste is sealed and lifted from the template container as one large, pre-sized bundle. The crane used to lift the bundle then transports and lowers the waste into the waiting shipping container.

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, a geologic disposal facility where packages of TRU waste are emplaced in an underground salt dome, is the only approved area in the U.S. for disposal of transuranic wastes.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC, is a Fluor-Daniel Partnership comprised of Fluor, Northrop Grumman 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.

SRNS-10-69