

News from the Savannah River Site

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SRS Employee Internationally Recognized for Innovative Ideas

SRNS receives two of 12 prestigious awards offered during first year of participation

AIKEN, S.C. (Oct. 30, 2013) – An employee of Department of Energy contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC (SRNS) was recently presented two international awards during the 71st annual “Ideas America Training Summit” held in Orlando, FL.

Ernie Williams received a silver level award in both the “Idea of the Year” and “Safety Idea of the Year” categories, providing SRNS with two of only 12 awards presented that day in four categories: Safety, Green (environmental), Team and Individual. A gold, silver and bronze award was presented in each category.

Over 100 entries were received by Ideas America from countries throughout the world.



SRNS employee Ernie Williams (left) recently received two internationally recognized awards within the “Idea of the Year” and “Safety Idea of the Year” categories. Williams’ manager Johnny Lott accepted the awards during 71st annual “Ideas America Training Summit” held in Orlando, FL, for Williams, who was unable to attend.

“This is such an awesome accomplishment and recognition for Ernie and SRNS,” said Cynthia Boler-Melton, SRNS Continuous Improvement Manager. “To have a strong employee suggestion program and empower employees to creatively enhance safety and reduce costs is the backbone of a successful company. Ernie is a shining example of the difference that one employee with a great idea can make.”

Ideas America (IA) is an internationally recognized, not-for-profit association serving professional managers and administrators of employee suggestion, innovation and involvement programs. It has been in existence for over 70 years. IA is the only association of its kind that recognizes member and non-member organizations through its awards program for innovative ideas that have been successfully implemented in the work place.

“There are about 20 co-workers of mine at SRNS who contributed in some way to this achievement,” said Williams. “Without them, it wouldn’t have happened. This really was a team effort.”

This is the first time SRNS has participated in the “Idea of the Year Awards” with Ideas America.

“Idea of the Year” Category – Silver Award Winner, Ernie Williams

Borescope Camera Use in TRU Waste Remediation

Highly contaminated transuranic (TRU) waste boxes must be remediated in order to ship compliant waste boxes to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, N.M. The old process involved various cutting tools and saws to cut open, inspect for and remove prohibited items. This method was time-consuming and exposed numerous workers to safety and exposure hazards. This IDEA eliminated the need to cut open the boxes by inserting a borescope camera through a small hole in the box, through which contents are inspected. If no prohibited items are found, the box does not have to be cut open for further inspection. This innovative process saves time and reduces exposure to radioactive materials, making this process safer for the workers.

“Safety Idea of the Year” Category - Silver Award Winner, Ernie Williams

Absorption Media Mesh Bag for Contaminated Liquids

In the TRU waste remediation process, loose absorption media is typically used to absorb liquids found in TRU waste storage boxes. This material is spread over the liquid and allowed time to “soak up” contaminated fluids. Employees, dressed in protective clothing, then enter the high radiation area to remove the absorbent by hand. This IDEA is based on using a commercially purchased mesh bag to contain the absorbent. This bagged absorbent soaks up the liquid and then is removed by remote control using a crane, eliminating numerous safety and radiological exposure hazards for employees.

“The IDEAS Program has been heralded nationally as a Top 10 employee suggestion process by the Center for Suggestion System Development,” said Brenda Kelly, SRNS IDEAS Program Administrator. “It has also won other national and international awards for performance, cost savings, and systems management. The program has accumulated savings and cost avoidances totaling more than \$220M since it was implemented in 1998.”

Williams is a manager within the SRNS Radiological Protection Department and is currently supporting environmental operations at the company’s H-Canyon facility.

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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