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For Immediate Release

Artificial intelligence pilot programs create efficiencies at SRS

AIKEN, S.C. – (October 14, 2024) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Information Technology (IT) department is conducting new artificial intelligence (AI) proof of concept (POC) solutions at the Savannah River Site (SRS). Based on the Microsoft Azure AI Services platform, these solutions will enhance efficiency, streamline internal processes and explore the use of relevant emerging technologies.



Katie Lunger, Savannah River Nuclear Solution (SRNS) IT Senior Systems Engineer and Brad Wilson, SRNS IT Associate System Engineer discuss the new artificial intelligence pilot programs that enhance efficiency and streamline internal processes at the Savannah River Site.

The new AI-powered platform will operate exclusively within the Site's secure internal network — providing a controlled yet interactive environment for employees. The first solution, ChatSRS, is based on the OpenAI ChatGPT large language model and is licensed by Microsoft. It can provide users with information across a broad spectrum, assist with academic inquiries and explain complex ideas.

According to SRNS Chief Information Officer Bruce Page, ChatSRS is similar to search engines Google and Wikipedia; but it differs in that it creates a human-like conversation with the user — aiding in writing, editing and offering basic technical support.

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“Instead of combing through websites to find your answer, this tool provides contextual feedback and supports a conversational experience associated with a given topic,” said Page. “Our goal is to leverage relevant emerging technology with the potential of enhanced productivity, within a technically controlled environment.”

The Microsoft Azure AI Services platform solutions will be rolled out in phases, with an initial focus on select human resources (HR) functions, followed by broader integration across the Site. Feedback associated with the POCs are closely monitored to refine and enhance the solutions before site-wide distribution.

“The Azure Platform Engineering team at SRS diligently collaborates with Microsoft experts to adhere to industry best practices, leveraging the mature Microsoft Azure platform,” said Debra Beard, SRNS Azure Platform Engineering Lead. “By working closely with Microsoft, the team ensures that the provided Azure AI Services align with the principles of responsible AI, reflecting a commitment to accountability, reliability and trustworthiness in technology.”

SRNS IT is also launching AskHR, a second AI solution, designed to streamline HR functions. From answering employee queries to providing personalized support, the platform utilizes advanced natural language processing capabilities to significantly reduce the time spent on routine conversations with employees.

“AskHR provides responses that are easy to understand with citations and support documents highlighting the applicable procedure or policy,” said Francine Burroughs, SRNS Senior Vice President, Workforce Services and Talent Management. “The platform utilizes chat experiences similar to ChatSRS, to provide employees with feedback instantly from pre-loaded and trusted internal data sources.”

SRNS Executive Vice President and Chief of Administration Sean Alford is confident that the platform will set a standard in HR management and reinforce the Site’s position as an industry leader in adopting new technology and innovative solutions.

“Our goal with the new AskHR platform is to enhance the efficiency of our HR operations and provide a more responsive and engaging experience for employees,” said Alford. “By adopting this advanced technology, we are optimizing our internal processes and demonstrating our commitment to innovation and employee satisfaction at SRS.”

Len Bowers, SRNS Associate Chief Information Officer, Governance and IT Strategic Management, said, “Leveraging our robust Service Oriented Architecture and comprehensive software development ecosystem, we seamlessly integrated the newly available Azure AI Services to enhance our service offerings, delivering cutting-edge AI applications with unprecedented speed. This swift deployment underscores our commitment to innovation and our ability to rapidly adapt to emerging technologies to meet the evolving needs of our customers.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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