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For Immediate Release

Weapon Intern Program participant contributes to national security missions

AIKEN, S.C., (October 10, 2024) – A Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employee was recently selected to participate in the Weapon Intern Program (WIP), an 11-month residential educational program hosted by Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



WIP Participant Garrett Harper

Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) Design Authority Engineer Garrett Harper became the latest participant from the Savannah River Site (SRS) selected for the prestigious technical training program, whose mission is to prepare future generations of experts in nuclear weapons stewardship.

The only program of its kind within the Nuclear Security Enterprise (NSE), the WIP offers participants an in-depth, Enterprise-wide exposure to all aspects of the nuclear deterrent. Over the past 25 years, WIP has graduated over 500 participants from multiple organizations, including the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Only 24 participants are accepted into the program each year. Of the 24 accepted, 12 are external to Sandia, allowing for one to two candidates to participate from SRS each year.

The Program includes extensive classroom instruction from subject matter experts on a variety of nuclear weapon topics. Classroom instruction is reinforced with Site visits across the NSE, a

variety of DOD facilities and historical sites. During their time in the program, WIP participants also complete class projects, such as weapon system program reviews, and a final capstone project, in which they are embedded in a Sandia working group. Those returning to SRS provide insight into nuclear weapon production and leverage established connections to support SRPPF and Savannah River Tritium Enterprise (SRTE) missions.

“Acceptance into the Weapon Intern Program is a prestigious honor that is given to a select few SRS candidates each year,” said Lisa Lee, Pit Production Operations Program Development Manager, who coordinates the SRPPF application and selection processes and also helps plan the annual WIP SRS site visit. “WIP candidates exemplify a high degree of professional dedication and personal commitment to the SRTE and SRPPF missions at SRS that support our Nation’s Nuclear Deterrence.”

Harper started the program September 16 and said he is looking forward to learning more about various aspects of nuclear weapons systems and how they may be integrated into SRS operations.

“When I return, I hope to share my experiences with other engineers to help SRPPF gain critical knowledge for our mission,” said Harper. “The goal is to come back with a well-rounded understanding of the U.S. Nuclear Security Enterprise, the ‘why’ and ‘how’ things work. I hope to take the knowledge gained from the program and share it with others back at SRPPF and continue building better relations with people from across the Nuclear Security Enterprise. I am looking forward to the different projects that I will have the opportunity to be involved with.”

SRPPF is part of NNSA’s two-site strategy between SRS and Los Alamos National Laboratory to produce no fewer than 80 war reserve plutonium pits per year to meet national security requirements. The two-site approach will provide an effective, responsive and resilient nuclear weapons infrastructure with the flexibility to adapt to shifting requirements and counter future threats.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

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.