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For Immediate Release

SRS welcomes new employees to Tritium facilities

Programs that support nation's defense recruit, hire and train new employees

AIKEN, S.C. (Nov. 15, 2018) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) recently welcomed a class of 24 newly-hired operators to the Savannah River Site's Savannah River Tritium Enterprise (SRTE), launching them on a path to careers providing vital support to the nation's nuclear defense.

SRTE, which is operated by SRNS for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), is the nation's center for operations involving tritium, the radioactive isotope of hydrogen necessary for the nation's nuclear defense. The operators make up a key group among the 136 new employees SRTE brought on board during FY18 as part of a structured plan to hire the right people for its vital missions.

"The country relies on us," said Mark Davis, SRNS Deputy Vice President for NNSA Operations & Programs, "so one of the most important things we need to do today is to ensure that we are prepared to continue successfully performing our work in the future." Hiring and qualifying new employees is at the heart of that preparation, he said, and operators are a high priority. Among the keys are to identify candidates with the right skills and attributes, demonstrate reasons to be enthusiastic about joining SRTE, then provide them the training to succeed at their assigned work scope.

Since FY15, SRTE has hired approximately 400 new employees, including approximately 97 operators. This pace of hiring builds the pipeline of employees to offset retiring and departing personnel (with time for training, getting a security clearance, etc.) and enables SRTE to grow as planned.

Recent SRTE initiatives are aiding this process.

Because SRTE operators must have an appropriate security clearance in order to access the operating facilities where their work is performed, there can be a months-long gap between when new hires initially report to work and when they can begin hands-on training in the operating facilities. By making use of a facility elsewhere on site that is not currently being used for operations, SRTE is able to begin hands-on training on glove-box procedures and other topics in an unclassified setting, in addition to the other unclassified training they receive during the interim.

The new operators were also the first new SRTE employees to participate in a newly-developed orientation program intended to welcome them into SRTE and help them become familiar with the organization and its leadership. This program introduces new hires to the history and mission of SRTE, how it fits into the rest of SRS, the Local Safety Improvement Team, security, Conduct of Operations, Human Resources topics, and other SRTE-specific topics. Response to the orientation program has been overwhelmingly positive, based on participant surveys. The newly hired operators particularly appreciated hearing from each of SRTE's different departments.

In addition to the 24 operators, in FY18 SRTE hired 112 employees to fill positions in quality, training, maintenance, engineering, safety/health/environment, first-line management, procedure writing, and other tasks that are vital for carrying out SRTE's national missions.

The process for filling those important positions starts with recruiting good employees. SRNS partnerships with local programs such as the SRS Community Reuse Organization's Nuclear Workforce Initiative, and the partnerships with Aiken Technical College and Augusta Technical College, are integral to SRTE's staffing plan. In addition, SRTE has begun carrying out targeted hiring efforts to recruit from the U.S. Navy Nuclear Operations for individuals with prior education and / or nuclear experience to align with the type of work performed. SRNS is also working with NNSA to connect personnel employed by MOX Services with opportunities at SRTE and elsewhere on site.

SRTE plans to continue hiring, including hiring another class of six operators, and numerous other new employees in the coming months.

"We have important missions to carry out, now and in the coming years," Davis said. "Our ability to accomplish those missions depends on our people. In return, we offer them the satisfaction that their work really matters to the nation."

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is 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-2018-736