

Principal Media Contact: DT Townsend
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC
803.952.7566
dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov

DOE Media Contact: Monte Volk
803.952.8283
monte.volk@srs.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS Hosts Area Teachers at Annual Environmental Justice Workshop

AIKEN, S.C., July 26, 2021 – About 30 local middle and high school teachers came together recently at the University of South Carolina Aiken for the Teaching Radiation, Energy and Technology (TREAT) Workshop, an event for local educators held by the Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office since 1995.

Through an environmental justice grant, DOE partners with Savannah State University (SSU) to develop and carry out these important workshops. The goal is to educate teachers of kindergarten through twelfth grade and local community leaders in the Central Savannah River Area about radiation, sources of radiation, radioactive waste management, effects of radiation on environmental health and the negative impact of environmental radiation exposure to humans.

The workshops are designed to educate the teachers so they can in turn provide radiation education to their students, and even encourage them to pursue careers in engineering and nuclear fields. Experts from DOE, Savannah River Site (SRS), the Environmental Protection Agency, and South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control come together to teach, answer questions and discuss potential career opportunities.

Melinda Downing, DOE's Environmental Justice Program Manager, welcomed the group and emphasized the importance of the workshop, during which participants heard about the history and missions of SRS, Radiation 101, Environmental Monitoring: Wildlife Surveillance Program and Emergency Preparedness.



Rev. Brendolyn Jenkins Boseman, executive director of the The Imani Group, Inc., speaks to middle and high school teachers during the annual Teaching Radiation, Energy and Technology Workshop in Aiken, South Carolina.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) is the management and operations contractor at SRS and provided presentations on a wide variety of topics including an overview of the SRNS Education Outreach program, provided by Taylor Rice, SRNS Education Outreach.

“I was there to educate the teachers about programs we offer and the ways we can support them as well as their students during the upcoming school year,” said Rice. “This is a great opportunity for teachers to learn about all the different missions that make up SRS and how we work to meet the needs of the communities near the Site.”

Rev. Brendolyn Jenkins Boseman, executive director of the Imani Group, Inc., a local community-based organization that provides leadership and diversity training, facilitated the workshop and shared her experience during her presentation, “Environmental Justice 101 - Community Perspective.”

Mindy Mets, director of regional workforce programs for the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization, provided an overview of nuclear technology regionally and globally.

SRS Environmental Justice Program Manager de’Lisa Carrico, the workshop coordinator, noted the high value placed on this type of communication with local teachers and community leaders.

“For several years now, we’ve added a second workshop for faith-based and community leaders,” said Carrico. “The participants have been highly engaged in productive discussion and have also expressed their appreciation for this special opportunity.”

“Working closely with Dr. Kenneth Sajwan, the project director at SSU, and Rev. Boseman, we’ve conducted a series of activities promoting environmental justice in addition to the TREAT workshops,” Carrico said. “For example, we hold environmental justice outreach meetings in different locations throughout the region where the public is invited. To best reach this audience, we usually meet in the evenings at churches where we offer fellowship and dinner along with site information. This approach has been quite successful as well.”

This collaboration strengthens meaningful public involvement in adversely impacted communities and is recognized as a model environmental justice program for communities around federal facilities.

“We hope that everyone who is touched by this extensive program, at the least, comes away with a general idea of what is accomplished at SRS and are comfortable with our dedication to safety, community outreach and environmental management,” Carrico said.

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: located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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