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SRS Completes Plutonium Downblending Goal Safely and Ahead of Schedule

AIKEN, S.C. (November 2, 2022) - Contractor employees at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) recently exceeded their plutonium (Pu) downblending goal for Fiscal Year 2022 ahead of schedule as part of the ongoing activities to remove Pu from South Carolina.

"Exceeding our FY22 downblending goal ahead of schedule is a testament to our team's commitment to safe, efficient and secure operations," said K Area Facility Manager Lee Sims of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the managing and operating contractor at SRS. "Much of our work in the past few years has been to introduce efficiencies and speed up our processing rates. This shows that our efforts are working."

Plutonium materials shipped to KAC are sealed inside a robust configuration of storage and shipping containers. The material is stored in K Area until such time as they are ready to be downblended. Downblending involves mixing the plutonium materials with an adulterant, which produces a mixture that can eventually be safely disposed of at a geologic repository.

This year, K Area personnel processed items with a wide variation in content, many of which provided unique challenges. "K Area's accomplishment is more impressive considering the nature of the packaging and risks associated with some of the materials we downblended this year," Sims said. "Exceeding projected processing rates while handling a variety of materials for the first time builds a great foundation for the program moving forward."

SRNS employees began downblending plutonium in K Area in 2016. Downblending is the method used at SRS to disposition surplus Pu.



SRS's K Area Complex