

# ECA Update: January 19, 2016

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### **Meeting will discuss possible shipments to Savannah River Site**

Augusta Chronicle

January 15, 2016

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The public will have a chance to comment on the Department of Energy's latest draft environmental assessment, which explores the possibility of Savannah River Site accepting radioactive fuel and highly enriched uranium from Germany.

According to a statement from the department Friday, a meeting will be held Feb. 4 at the North Augusta Community Center for stakeholders to comment on the assessment, which serves to measure the environmental impact associated with the material being processed at the South Carolina site.

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## Calendar

### **DOE Consent-Based Siting Public Meeting**

January 20, 2016

1 PM - 4 PM EST

Marriott Renaissance  
Washington, DC,

Downtown Hotel

999 9th St NW,

Washington, DC 20001

Click here to register for the [Webcast](#).

### **FY17 Budget Request**

This particular assessment evaluates the potential impact of the material from Germany, including uranium that originated in the U.S.

A copy of the assessment posted to the Energy Department's Web site Friday said the spent fuel comes from two German reactors, both of which ceased operations in the late 1980s.

The fuel takes the form of about a million small "irradiated graphite pebble" balls that contain some uranium and thorium and are currently stored in 455 casks.

"Prior to irradiation, the fuel contained approximately 900 kilograms (1,980 pounds) of (highly enriched uranium) provided by the United States," the notice read.

Germany first approached the Energy Department in 2012 about the possible storage and disposition of the material, and it funded research at the Savannah River National Laboratory that explored ways to process the fuel, capabilities that are "unique to DOE and SRS," according to the environmental assessment.

Germany would pay the full cost to treat and dispose of the material if the Energy Department accept its, but such a decision wouldn't come until after the 45-day public comment period, which ends March 7.

Accepting the material would be in support of a national policy that aims to eliminate highly enriched uranium from civil commerce through storage and disposition, and converting it into a form "no longer usable for an improvised nuclear device."

However, Tom Clements, the director of the nuclear watchdog group SRS Watch, said an August 2013 memo he obtained through an open records request states that at least some of the material from the Julich, Germany, facility is "not of a proliferation concern."

"The document affirms that the growing concern in South Carolina that SRS is becoming an international nuclear waste dump is legitimate as the document presents no pathway out of SRS for any of the German waste if brought into SRS for reprocessing," he said.

Transporting the material would likely take 30 shipments over more than three years, according to the assessment.

February 9th, 2016

**Save the Date:**  
DOE National Cleanup  
Workshop  
September 14-15, 2016  
Hilton Alexandria Mark  
Center  
Alexandria, VA

The Energy Department could choose to take no action, leaving the material in Germany.

### **Congressmen set to tour Savannah River Site MOX facility**

Aiken Standard

January 15, 2016

[LINK](#)

U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson and several other congressmen will tour the Savannah River Site's MOX facility on Tuesday.

Wilson will be joined by fellow U.S. Reps. Rick Allen, R-Ga.; Mick Mulvaney, R-S.C.; and Donald Norcross, D-N. J.

The group will tour the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility, a critical part of the nation's MOX project, which is expected to convert 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear fuel.

Following rising cost assessments and previous attempts to freeze the project, Congress authorized Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz to assess a downblending alternative – one that would dilute the plutonium and ship it to a repository – and have the assessment ready before President Barack Obama rolls out his budget proposal, which usually surfaces in February.

But Wilson said “there is no debate” and that MOX plays a critical part in the national security and environmental cleanup missions.

“There are always those who would like to see the MOX project terminated,” Wilson said. “Therefore, I have invited fellow members of Congress to join me in touring the facility to see its importance and positive impact in the community firsthand.”

### **Energy department announces investments in advanced nuclear power reactors**

Local 8 News

January 15, 2016

[LINK](#)

Two companies have been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy to further develop advanced nuclear reactor designs. The awards include a multi-year cost share of up to \$80 million for both

companies.

The companies, X-energy and Southern Company will support work to address key technical challenges to the design, construction, and operation of next generation nuclear reactors. The project is in support of the Obama Administration's goal of producing more carbon-free energy.

The projects announced Friday will allow industry led teams, which include participants from universities and national laboratories, to further nuclear energy technology, and will enable companies to further develop their advanced reactor designs with potential for demonstration in the 2035 timeframe. Initially, DOE's investment will be \$6 million for each project and both companies will provide cost-share.

The two advanced nuclear power projects receiving awards are:

- X-energy - partnering with BWX Technology, Oregon State University, Teledyne-Brown Engineering, SGL Group, Idaho National Laboratory, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory to solve design and fuel development challenges of the Xe-100 Pebble Bed Advanced Reactor. This type of reactor has next generation design and the most advanced safety features and it is also smaller than traditional nuclear reactors. These factors would potentially enable such a reactor to serve a wider array of communities - particularly densely populated areas - while ensuring public safety.

- Southern Company Services - partnering with TerraPower, Electric Power Research Institute, Vanderbilt University, and Oak Ridge National Laboratory to perform integrated effects tests and materials suitability studies to support development of the Molten Chloride Fast Reactor. The MFCR is also a next generation design with the most advanced safety features that enable its potential use across the country.

The awards are an example of the public-private partnerships under the Idaho National Laboratory led Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN). The program, announced last fall, is intended to help private industry move nuclear energy forward. Separate legislation, announced Thursday, would allow INL to serve as a sort of test facility for new technology.

**DOE's big problem: Hazards outpace funding for old nuke buildings**

Knoxville News

January 18, 2016

[LINK](#)

OAK RIDGE — The Alpha-5 building at the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant is a notorious example of a big problem facing the U.S. Department of Energy.

Old nuclear facilities have outlived their usefulness, requiring their shutdown without the money available to clean them up or, in some cases, to keep them from falling apart and spreading their contamination.

Alpha-5, an original part of the World War II Manhattan Project, has been shut down for more than a decade, and it's begging for attention. The 613,000-square-foot building was used for various missions during the Cold War, and it's thoroughly contaminated with uranium, mercury, beryllium and other hazards that have been made worse by the intrusion of water from an old and failing roof.

The basement is a swamp. About 2 million gallons of water have collected there, allowing toxic contaminants to mingle directly with the groundwater. Heavy moisture inside Alpha-5 has caused mold to grow like crazy, forcing the use of a respirator by anyone who ventures inside.

The DOE has a long list of cleanup projects underway that pose difficult challenges and cost a ton of money.

But the problem posed by Alpha-5 and other so-called "excess facilities" is they're not yet in the cleanup queue. In many cases there are no definitive plans for what's known in the cleanup world as D&D — deactivation and decommissioning — or the funds to address their risks.

"When it comes to excess facilities, the first thing to keep in mind is we're talking about a tremendous number of facilities," Mark Whitney, the DOE's deputy assistant secretary for environmental management, said at a conference last month in Knoxville.

Whitney said the agency's contractors have demolished about 2,500 old and dirty facilities at DOE sites around the country, including Oak Ridge. That's about half of what's planned, but there's another 1,000 excess facilities yet to be added to the list, he said.

"At times, the list seems neverending," Whitney said, "but

measurable progress is being made."

Various reports, including one last year by the DOE's Office of Inspector General, have characterized Alpha-5 as the "worst of the worst."

Asked whether the facility is deserving of its reputation, Y-12's Ken Harrawood said, "I think it probably is."

Harrawood declined to give an estimate of what it'll cost to clean up and tear down the huge facility.

"We're working on an estimate, but it's a pretty rough estimate at this time," he said, expressing concern that establishing a price tag might affect future bids if a subcontract to do the work is put out for bids.

The Alpha-5 situation is particularly vexing because the DOE spent about \$100 million of its Recovery Act funding on a project in 2011 that removed tons of surplus materials and unneeded equipment from the big building. About 5,430 containers of waste materials were sent to Nevada for disposal, and the project was supposed to be a giant step toward the eventual cleanup and demolition.

The roof failures that followed created a whole new suite of water-borne problems — although various steps have been taken, including some roof repairs, to keep matters from being even worse than they are.

Alpha-5 doesn't pose as many radioactive hazards as some of the DOE's other big-time demolition projects, such as the Rocky Flats plutonium facility in Colorado or the K-25 uranium-enrichment plant in Oak Ridge, Harrawood said.

But the cleanup will be complicated by Alpha-5's location adjacent to active production facilities at Y-12, he said.

The location could limit the access of cleanup workers or pose potential hazards to Y-12 workers not engaged in cleanup activities.

Harrawood indicated Consolidated Nuclear Security — the government's managing contractor at Y-12 — might undertake a near-term project to drain the water in Alpha-5's basement.

He said contractor officials believe Y-12 has the on-site capabilities at the Central Mercury Treatment Facility to treat the polluted water. An evaluation is in the works.

"We're going to do some work this year to get some pumps and agitate water to get a representative sample," he said.

If the water meets the acceptance criteria for the existing treatment facility, then the Y-12 contractor may proceed with the project, Harrawood said. The treatment facility has enough capacity to handle the extra work, but the concern is the water may have too much brine for the treatment systems.

Jeff Smith, Oak Ridge National Laboratory's deputy lab director for operations, was co-chair of a DOE working group convened last year to look at the problem with excess facilities at DOE sites around the country.

Smith said the group concluded the problem was not being addressed by any of the agency's current environmental management programs.

"If you don't start working on it, it's going to get more and more costly and begin to impact existing missions because . . . some of these facilities are dispersed among production facilities," Smith said.

Smith said the working group stated its case to Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, and he said there's reason to believe the DOE will try to include about \$100 million in the fiscal year 2017 budget. Even if that's approved, it won't solve a multibillion-dollar problem, but Smith said it would be a start.

ORNL has inactive nuclear facilities awaiting cleanup attention on its campus, and the lab also has responsibility for several other facilities — such as the old Mouse House and biology research complex — that are physically located at Y-12.

The biology complex hasn't been used for many years, and it's falling apart, with pieces of the exterior occasionally sliding to the ground.

"It's as close to being knocked down as you can get," Smith said. Beta-3, another World War II-era building at Y-12, will require a more delicate touch because it houses equipment that will become part of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Cleanup will have to take place selectively inside the big building.

The DOE's environmental management program in Oak Ridge received more money than expected for fiscal year 2016, and it appears that some of the \$473.8 million may be used to address problems at excess facilities.

"There is funding available that allows us to identify additional opportunities in the (environmental management) program where we can execute projects that will reduce risks and put some of the higher-risk facilities on the Oak Ridge reservation in a safer and more stable condition," said Mike Koentop, executive officer of the DOE's Office of Environmental Management in Oak Ridge.

Chris Thompson, who oversees DOE cleanup activities for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, said the state will work closely with the DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set priorities. She said the state has asked for more information on the DOE's plans for deactivating buildings and is considering additional milestones to ensure timely cleanup.

Thompson said the DOE should be able to complete its Oak Ridge cleanup, including the excess facilities, by 2046 if it receives annual cleanup funding of about \$420 million.

### **Smith named president, CEO at Consolidated Nuclear Security, which operates Y-12, Pantex**

Oak Ridge Today

January 14, 2016

[LINK](#)

The chief operating officer at the company that operates Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge and Pantex Plant in Texas will become the president and chief executive officer on February 1.

Morgan Smith will replace Jim Haynes in the top leadership position at Consolidated Nuclear Security LLC. Haynes is returning to an executive position at Bechtel, a press release said. Bechtel National Inc. is part of the CNS team.

CNS said Haynes successfully led the government contractor through its first phase as a consolidated organization. CNS began managing and operating Y-12 and Pantex under a consolidated

contract on July 1, 2014. Both sites are important production facilities for federal nuclear security work.

“With the majority of key consolidation activities complete, CNS moves to its next phase focused on advancing operational performance and increasing production,” Haynes said in the press release. “Morgan Smith is uniquely positioned to lead CNS at this time based on his past experience managing Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program facilities and his time at CNS. Morgan and I have mapped out the path for a successful handoff. I could not be more confident in Morgan’s abilities.”

Smith, who has been the CNS chief operating officer since the company took over management of the two sites, has 38 years of technical and managerial experience. Prior to coming to CNS, he was instrumental in planning and implementing the consolidation of Bettis and Knolls Atomic Power Laboratories into a single organization run by Bechtel Marine Propulsion Corporation. As general manager of Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory from 2009 through mid-2014, Smith directly managed the lab and co-managed BMPC—a scope that included 7,000 employees and nearly \$2 billion worth of work across five sites, the press release said.

“I have great respect for the work performed by the dedicated employees of Pantex and Y-12—work that our great nation and her allies rely upon,” Smith said. “I am committed to delivering the safety, security, quality, and overall excellence that our country requires as we execute our important mission for the country. I also look forward to continuing the great relationships Jim Haynes developed with the communities of Amarillo and Oak Ridge and throughout the Texas Panhandle and East Tennessee.”

Haynes arrived at Y-12 from Bechtel in 2011, first serving as deputy general manager under the previous operating contractor.

He became the first CNS president and CEO at the start of contract transition in early 2014. He is recognized as a leader in managing large organizations during times of consolidation and structural change and where safety is paramount.

“Jim Haynes led CNS through one of the most challenging transitions in NNSA history, joining two sites into one unified enterprise,” said CNS Chairman of the Board Craig Albert. “Under Jim, CNS faced the challenges of consolidation head on and met key mission deliverables and milestones, improved project

performance, and helped establish a strong capital project pipeline.

CNS has developed a strong foundation with common goals, values, and daily absolutes. He leaves CNS well positioned to meet the growing demands for providing global security and national defense well into the future.”

Haynes will remain with CNS through the end of January to complete the transition of duties to Smith before beginning his new role with Bechtel on February 1.

More information will be added as it becomes available.

### **Congress faces rising pressure to help rejected nuclear workers**

Centre Daily Times

January 14, 2016

[LINK](#)

With tens of thousands of sick nuclear-weapons workers thwarted in their bids to win compensation from the U.S. government, Congress is under growing pressure to investigate what went wrong with a \$12 billion federal program aimed at helping them.

“It’s disgraceful how the affected workers have been treated by a system that’s overly bureaucratic,” said Colorado Democratic Rep. Jared Polis, one of six members of the House of Representatives now pushing for hearings, along with Democratic Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Tom Udall of New Mexico.

Udall said the program had been “plagued with delays and bureaucratic hurdles,” forcing too many workers to spend their final years battling both illness and the government.

“Too often, workers die waiting for compensation that they never receive,” he said.

#### **Irradiated**

The U.S. government has compensated over 52,000 nuclear workers illnesses related to radiation exposure, but the process is complicated. Deaths resulting from exposure while working at the plants and the compensation process for survivors begs the question: How much is a life worth?

The calls for a congressional probe come after an investigation by

McClatchy last month found that fewer than half of those who've applied for compensation have received any money, even though the program's costs have ballooned.

McClatchy reported that 107,394 current and former nuclear workers have sought compensation for cancers and other illnesses after working at 325 current and defunct nuclear sites across the nation.

Overall, the federal government had made payments to more than 53,000 sickened or dead workers under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program, which launched in 2001. In many cases, the money went to surviving relatives who'd taken on the battles of their deceased loved ones.

And 7,762 workers died after filing for compensation, getting nothing, according to McClatchy's analysis of government records.

**THIS IS CLEARLY A TANGLED SET OF ISSUES THAT CONGRESS SHOULD TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT.**

Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri

"This is clearly a tangled set of issues that Congress should take another look at," McCaskill said Thursday. "The folks who worked on the front lines of developing and maintaining America's nuclear capability earned the right to know that if that work made them sick, their government won't turn its back on them."

Missouri Democratic Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, who once worked in a nuclear weapons plant in Kansas City, first requested congressional action in December, asking for "a full and unrestrained investigation" in a letter to the House Committee on Government Reform.

His push is now backed by Sens. McCaskill and Udall and five other House members: Democrats Polis, Ed Perlmutter of Colorado, Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico and James Clyburn of South Carolina, and Republican Rep. Ed Whitfield of Kentucky.

**IS THIS WORKING? IS IT HELPING THE PEOPLE WE WANT TO HELP?**

Democratic Rep. Ed Perlmutter of Colorado

"It is time to do it," Perlmutter said, adding that Congress has many questions to answer: "Is this working? Is it helping the people we want to help? Is it helping people who don't deserve it?"

In too many cases, he said, the compensation program, which is run by the U.S. Department of Labor, is “weighted against the worker.”

McClatchy’s investigation also raised questions about worker safety as the U.S. gears up to spend \$1 trillion in modernizing its nuclear arsenal over the next 30 years. McClatchy found that stronger safety standards have not stopped accidents or exposure to radiation or other toxins, and reported that contractors for the Department of Energy have paid tens of millions in fines for safety violations related to radiation at nuclear facilities around the country.

“Hearings on the program are long overdue,” said Terrie Barrie, of Craig, Colorado, founding member of the Alliance of Nuclear Worker Advocacy Groups. She thinks that federal officials are trying to cut costs, and she said the program had deteriorated since 2007, when Congress held its last hearings on it.

“This compensation program needs a bright light shone upon it. There should be some kind of interest from Congress to say: ‘What’s going on here?’ ” Barrie said.

Clyburn said he was concerned about “ongoing health and safety problems faced by workers at the Savannah River Site” in South Carolina and that he supported hearings to look into the issue.

Cleaver said the number of employees who’d been compensated at the Kansas City plant, where he’d worked as a young man, seemed “invisibly low.” The approval rate is 23 percent, less than half the national average, according to an analysis of government data McClatchy obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Barrie and some members of Congress fear that the Department of Labor will make it even tougher for sick workers exposed to toxic chemicals in the last two decades.

A new department policy puts a higher burden of proof on employees to document their illnesses from any post-1995 exposures. Claims examiners have been ordered to conclude that workers have not had any significant exposure to toxic substances unless they can provide evidence to the contrary.

“There is a higher bar, and I don’t like it,” said Perlmutter, adding that it will make it harder for employees at Colorado’s Rocky Flats

site to get help from the federal government if they're struck by cancer or other illnesses.

Lujan said the compensation program had become “far too difficult to navigate, causing too many workers to be denied benefits.” His father, former New Mexico House Speaker Ben Lujan, blamed the lung cancer that killed him in 2012 on exposure to asbestos while he worked at the Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico.

“I believe that Congress must do everything possible to conduct vigorous oversight of this program to ensure that nuclear workers are provided the health care and benefits that they have earned,” Lujan said.

Whitfield said that many workers at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Kentucky had faced challenges in “weaving through the federal government maze to claim benefits they deserve.”

He said a newly created advisory board that would be seated this year would help provide better oversight of the compensation program and should expedite payments. But he said he had backed congressional hearings in the past and would do so again.

Polis said he had hoped the advisory board Congress created last year would be up and running by now. But he said: “We’ve been very disappointed with how this process has played out so far.”

Cleaver is following up his request for an investigation with a letter to the Department of Labor. Along with Udall, Polis, Perlmutter, Lujan and Whitfield, he is requesting that the department extend the public comment period, currently scheduled to end Jan. 19, to allow more input before finalizing proposed changes to the compensation program. Critics fear the new rules would make it harder to qualify.

Part of the reason the extension is sought is to give the new advisory board time to review the changes, as well.

**THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORKED AT THESE NUCLEAR FACILITIES HAVE SACRIFICED THEIR HEALTH, AND EVEN THEIR LIVES, FOR THEIR COUNTRY.**  
Democratic Rep. Emanuel Cleaver of Missouri

“The men and women who worked at these nuclear facilities have sacrificed their health, and even their lives, for their country,”

Cleaver said, pledging to work “to make sure that the claims process is timely, transparent and accurate.”

The Department of Labor defended its management of the compensation program, saying it has sped up its processing time for claims and that its acceptance rate for claims has increased since 2008.

“The Department of Labor’s goal is to accept as many claims as possible within the confines of the law,” said spokeswoman Amanda McClure.

And, she said, “we look forward to engaging all interested parties to work on ways to improve the program and help qualified former workers receive the benefits that they deserve.”

McCaskill’s office has asked for a briefing on the program from the Labor Department.

