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ECA January Bulletin Now Available

ECA Staff

The January 2016 Bulletin is now available and can be read online [here](#).

Stories include:

- Consent-Based Siting Meeting Wrap-Up
- WIPP on Track to Reopen in 2016
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If there are any stories you'd like featured in next month's issue or important news you'd like to share, please feel free to contact devon@energyca.org.

Office of Nuclear Energy to Enhance Small Business Access to Research Facilities

DOE-EM

January 27, 2016

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WASHINGTON -- Furthering efforts to encourage clean energy innovation in nuclear energy, the Department of Energy (DOE) released a draft Request for Assistance (RFA) today for the Nuclear Energy Voucher Program to be used by small business applicants.

The voucher program will give businesses access to DOE's unique, globally recognized facilities and researchers, which will help them further their efforts to develop next generation nuclear energy technologies. The Nuclear Energy Voucher Program represents a pilot initiative of the Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear (GAIN) to provide the nuclear community with access to the technical, regulatory, and financial support necessary to move new or advanced nuclear reactor designs toward commercialization while ensuring the continued safe, reliable, and economic operation of the existing nuclear fleet. GAIN was launched in November 2015 as the nuclear energy component of DOE's Clean Energy Investment Center.

"Strong engagement between federal agencies, the research community, and technology developers is vital to bring new nuclear technologies to market, and is a core mission of GAIN," said Under Secretary of Science and Energy, Lynn Orr. "By providing companies access to the Department's world class nuclear researchers, data, and facilities, we will help build the partnerships necessary to bring innovative technologies to the market faster by helping them solve their most pressing challenges." Recent reports have found strong interest in nuclear energy innovation from a number of new companies. Through this voucher initiative, the Energy Department will provide small businesses access to the expertise and tools to test, validate, and introduce new products, expand businesses, and grow the clean nuclear energy industry.

The Department is seeking feedback on the draft RFA and will accept comments and questions until February 16, 2016. The final RFA will be issued by March 1, 2016 and the selected applicants will be announced in the spring. These cost-shared vouchers will support small businesses by

providing funding to a federally funded research and development center or a partner user facility to help companies overcome critical technology and commercialization challenges.

Project are anticipated to be 6-12 months in duration and during the initial pilot project, the Energy Department will fund up to 10 vouchers providing a total DOE cost-share of \$2 million.

Additional information on the pilot Nuclear Energy Voucher Program and the Draft RFA can be found at <http://gain.inl.gov>.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions' president honored by National Safety Council

Aiken Standard

January 31, 2016

[LINK](#)

Carol Johnson is one of seven honorees to be named as one of the 2016 CEOs Who "Get It" – an award handed down by the National Safety Council.

Founded in 1913 and chartered by Congress, the National Safety Council is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

"These CEOs understand that safety must start at the top," said Deborah A.P. Hersman, president and CEO of the Council. "They have set a safety standard for both their colleagues and employees, and we are proud to recognize their efforts to make our world safer."

Johnson is president and CEO of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, or SRNS, the Savannah River Site's management and operations contractor.

Johnson was selected based on her focus and dedication to SRNS' safety performance, culture and continuous safety improvement, according to site officials.

Among Department of Energy officials, Johnson was credited for recognizing safety issues within the SRNS work scope and initiating an operational safety pause on all nonessential missions. The pause began Sept. 11 after four workers improperly stored plutonium in a container not suitable for transport. That incident, among others, led Johnson to initiate the pause.

On the award, Johnson said she cares about SRNS employees and the important work they do to keep the world safer.

"We are a team, and it is my job to do my very best to ensure that each member of our team goes home in the same condition they arrived at work each day. This is my priority as president and CEO of SRNS," Johnson said.

Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board Eyes Area G

Los Alamos Daily Post

January 31, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Defense Nuclear Facility Safety Board plans to perform a comprehensive review of emergency preparedness and response programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory in the next few weeks.

"We've been informed by the DNFSB that they're planning on holding some hearings out here sometime in the March time frame associated with Area G," said Doug Hintze, Environmental Management field office manager, speaking Wednesday to the Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board.

Technical Area 54, which includes Area G and its facilities, is the main site at LANL for the disposal of low level waste and other contaminated materials,

including TRU or transuranic waste, man-made materials that contain plutonium, americium or certain other radioactive elements.

On Jan. 7, DNFSB Chairman Joyce Connery advised Energy Secretary Moniz that the board would be following up on a number of concerns that have been raised related to weaknesses associated with identifying deficiencies in emergency preparations at LANL's nuclear defense facilities and correcting them effectively.

One of her specific observations had to do with potential release hazards associated with the "inappropriately remediated nitrate salts," the materials identified as having caused the underground explosion in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant on Valentine's Day 2014.

Connery also pointed out emergency response plans that "have not been updated to reflect the current understanding of the release hazard associated with these materials." Nitrate salts are one of the residual products from the extraction and recovery of plutonium from various operations in the nuclear complex. The canisters that remain at LANL containing the materials that were inappropriately treated are segregated under close surveillance in a temperature-controlled dome at Area G.

Safety board site representative have contributed additional information in a paper trail of observations that go back to at least the week of October 2, 2015, when they reported that Area G personnel were beginning an investigation "after they determined that material at risk values for certain types of nitrate salt wastes may be underreported by a factor of as much as 10." The Area G personnel discovered that the "historical data from the Plutonium Facility relied on safeguard values that did not accurately reflect the content of americium 241." They were then backtracking to see if there were other waste streams that might be affected by a higher americium content.

In a subsequent observation for the week ending Dec. 25, safety board site representatives reported that Area G activities had been curtailed, mainly because “LANL personnel are working to accelerate final ‘render-safe’ treatment of the inappropriately remediated nitrate salt wastes after EM and NNSA personnel raised questions on the adequacy of the controls for the continued safe storage of these materials.”

At a Northern New Mexico Citizens Advisory Board Meeting on Wednesday this week, Doug Hintze, the manager of the LANL EM Environmental Field Office announced the DNFSB plans to hold hearings in the area sometime in March. “We don’t know what the topics are,” he said. “When we have further information, we’ll pass that on to you.”

After the meeting, LANL Associate Director for Environmental Program acknowledged the board’s plans to hold a hearing that would include, but not be limited to, the issue of nitrate salts. “We’ve been looking at that very diligently,” he said. “There’s a number of issues that we’ve been addressing in the safety basis category associated with the inventory of waste at Area G. Not only the nitrate salts, but that certainly is a major piece of it.”

Officials hope to bring hundreds of manufacturing jobs onto 1,300 acre land transfer from Hanford Site

NBC Right Now

February 1, 2016

[LINK](#)

RICHLAND, WA. -- A huge transfer of land was made official Monday and it could have a big impact on our local economy.

The area we're talking about is in Richland on the corner of Stevens Drive and Horn Rapids Road. That's where about 1,300 acres has been transferred from the Hanford site to the possession of the Port of Benton and the City of Richland.

Monday, officials from the Tri-City Development Council, the City and the Port of Benton officially signed the paperwork completing the land transfer. The land doesn't look like much now but several years from now it will look completely different with hopefully either a manufacturing company or energy firm on the land.

Robert Larson from the Port of Benton says they expect to bring hundreds if not thousands of jobs and hundreds of thousands of dollars if not more, to Richland's economy.

"It's a really exciting thing and there's already people talking from overseas that want to come in and maybe start a manufacturing company, but that's still up in the air," Larson said.

The next step for the Port of Benton and the City of Richland is to create a master plan. The two sides plan to work together to bring in an energy company or manufacturer.

As of today, the Port of Benton and the City of Richland officially own the property and are excited about what they can bring to the local economy.

Officials: Savannah River Nuclear Solutions' job projections are warranted

Aiken Standard

February 2, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Savannah River Site's management and operations contract will be up in two years; however, contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, or SRNS, and Department of Energy officials said the recent projection to fill 2,000 jobs over the next several years is warranted to continue long-term plans for mission work at the site.

On Jan. 22, SRNS reported it would hire as many as 2,000 qualified production operators, radiation control personnel and mechanics with the help of partnerships with various colleges and universities.

Stakeholders talk impact of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions employment
The majority of those jobs will be replacement jobs including all 80 of the operator positions that SRNS expects to fill this year, said SRNS spokeswoman Dawn Haygood. She added that the number could grow based on future employee departures. Overall, SRNS is looking to fill up to 2,000 openings over the next five to seven years.

Though the current SRNS contract is scheduled to end July 31, 2018, Haygood said the projection to replace such a high number of workers in the out-years makes sense.

“Regardless of the contractor in place to support the Department of Energy, the projected number of employees remains the same to execute the missions within this contract’s scope,” she said. “We believe it is our obligation to perform workforce planning analysis, regardless who the future contractor may be.”

As the management and operations contractor, SRNS performs work for both the Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management and the National Nuclear Security Administration, a semi-autonomous branch of the department.

SRNS missions include the processing of nuclear materials, assisting in environmental cleanup and operating the Savannah River National Lab. Those missions are funded by the federal government through the Energy Department.

SRS officials within the Energy Department and SRNS leaders acknowledged that budget uncertainties each year can play a role in employment. Still, SRS

spokesman Jim Guisti said the Department of Energy is on board with SRNS' attempt to project job needs in the coming years.

"We don't necessarily look at our jobs per contract because even if management changes, the need to do the work will still be there," Guisti said. "They project beyond their contract which they are required to do and we all agree that we have an aging workforce that will need to be replaced."

SRNS employs 5,297 workers, according to the contractor's count from December 2015. The effort to replace more than a third of the contractor comes after 2014 projections that more than half of the workforce will be eligible for retirement in the coming years.

Starting Over on Nuclear Waste Storage

Occupational Health and Safety Online

February 1, 2016

[LINK](#)

A Dec. 21, 2015, announcement from Franklin Orr, U.S. Department of Energy under secretary for science and energy, surprised me: He explained that DOE has again begun working on "a consent-based approach to siting future nuclear waste management facilities as part of a strategy for the long-term storage and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste." Which was the goal of those seeking to inter such fuel and wastes at Yucca Mountain in Nevada for roughly 20 years.

While I doubt this could become a hot-button issue in the 2016 presidential campaigns, it's not impossible. Nevada's state and federal officials battled Yucca Mountain for years and ultimately found a president, Barack Obama, who agreed with them and killed the project, which had cost billions of dollars by then.

Orr explained that a consent-based siting process will ensure that communities, tribes, and states are partners comfortable with the location of future storage and disposal facilities before they are built. "We will be developing a detailed plan for this process in the coming year, and we need your help," he added.

DOE will follow the process laid out in a 2013 strategy document that was based on recommendations from President Obama's Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future. The strategy is to establish a pilot interim storage facility that mainly will accept used nuclear fuel from reactors that have already been shut down; a larger interim storage facility; and one or more long-term geologic repositories.

Orr asked the public to submit comments or concerns to consentbasedsiting@hq.doe.gov, to visit energy.gov/consentbasedsiting, and to attend one of the public meetings that will take place across the country. The kickoff meeting was set for Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C.

Veolia expands in nuclear waste clean-up with Kurion acquisition

Reuters

February 3, 2016

[LINK](#)

French water and waste group Veolia (VIE.PA) said it bought U.S. nuclear waste clean-up company Kurion for \$350 million as it chases a slice of a market seen worth \$210 billion over the next 15 years.

Veolia said it expects the new business to contribute annual revenue of \$350-400 million by 2020, including about \$250 million from waste treatment and \$100-150 from decommissioning nuclear installations.

Kurion, which was one of few international firms involved in the early stages of the clean-up of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, currently

has annual sales of about \$100 million. Veolia generates about \$20 million from cleaning up nuclear waste.

"Bringing Kurion and its employees into Veolia is going to enable us to develop a world-class integrated offer in nuclear facility clean-up and treatment of low-level radioactive waste around the world," Veolia Chief Executive Antoine Frerot said.

Veolia plans to target the United States, Britain, France and Japan, which together amount to a market of \$118 billion by 2030, and will focus on low-level radioactive waste, which represents 97 percent of the volume but just 0.1 percent of the radioactivity.

There are about 400 nuclear plants in operation worldwide, of which 100 to 150 will be decommissioned by 2030. Another 50 nuclear research centres will also have to be dismantled, Veolia said.

Ferot said Veolia would focus on concentrating the waste to reduce its volume so that it can be stored safely, mostly in glass.

Kurion was founded in 2008 and now employs over 200 people. Veolia had total revenue of 23.88 billion euros (\$26.05 billion) in 2014.