

ECA Update: January 13, 2016

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DOE Agenda: "Kick-off" meeting on Consent Based Siting
ECA Staff

Please find [attached](#) the agenda for DOE's "kick-off" meeting which will set the tone for its consent-based siting initiative. The meeting will be held on January 20, 2016 at the Renaissance Washington, DC Downtown Hotel (999 9th St NW, Washington, DC 20001) from 1 PM-4 PM. The public is invited to participate in person or via webcast, but all must register.

Please register here: [Kickoff Meeting Registration](#) and see the DOE website for updates on Consent-based Siting <http://energy.gov/ne/consent-based-siting>.

Board says Savannah River Nuclear Site More Prepared for Emergencies
Emergency Management
January 11, 2016
[LINK](#)

(TNS) - The Savannah River Site's two largest contractors have

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[Calendar](#)
State of the Union
January 14, 2016
9:00 PM EST
Watch on
[White House website.](#)

DOE Consent-Based Siting Public Meeting
January 20, 2016
1 PM - 4 PM EST
Marriott Renaissance
Washington, DC,
Downtown Hotel

hired more staffers and implemented emergency preparedness actions after a federal safety board reported in September that a reduction in related staff has decreased the site's ability to prepare for potential emergencies.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board wrote a Dec. 22 letter to Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz stating that the site's heightened awareness of emergency preparedness could also be a benefit to other sites.

The safety board is an independent group within the executive branch that provides recommendations on DOE safety issues.

In June, the board reported that Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the site's management and operations contractor, and Savannah River Remediation, the site's liquid waste contractor, had seen significant reductions in staff supporting emergency preparedness. Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, or SRNS, staff experienced a 40 percent reduction between fiscal years 2011 and 2014 and also experienced a 70 percent turnover rate over the past five years, according to the group.

SRNS spokesperson Barbara Smoak said the reduction was caused by several factors including "funding challenges and normal attrition, including personnel retiring or moving to other positions both internal and external to the company."

Savannah River Remediation, or SRR, experienced an almost 30 percent reduction in its full time equivalents due to workforce restructuring, according to the safety board. The turnover resulted in a loss of several experienced staff members. As a result, recent hires usually had two years or less of relevant experience, which impacted effectiveness in drill scenarios and other areas, according to the safety board.

Corrective measures have since been taken, including more emergency preparedness hires for both contractors. The contractors also submitted assessment reports, with SRR identifying 27 opportunities for improvement and SRNS finding 69 opportunities for improvement.

Smoak added that SRNS also has an active joint response agreement in place with emergency responders in the surrounding communities.

SRR spokesperson Amy Joslin said the contractor's Emergency

999 9th St NW,
Washington, DC 20001
Click here to register for
the [Webcast](#).

FY17 Budget Request
February 9th, 2016

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

Preparedness Program has conducted more than 100 drills/exercises since January 2013.

“During that period, SRR has ensured that the proficiency of Emergency Response Organization personnel has been maintained,” Joselin said.

Plans for Hanford national park to open for public comment

Tri-City Herald

January 11, 2016

[LINK](#)

TRI-CITIES, Wash. (AP) — Federal officials are seeking input from Tri-City area residents on plans for the new Manhattan Project National Historical Park, which will include Hanford's historic B Reactor.

The Tri-City Herald reports (<http://bit.ly/1TOckZR>) an open house will be held Feb. 4 at the Richland Library for the public to provide comment. It will be the public's first opportunity to provide input since the park was dedicated in November.

Hanford is one of the park's three sites where work on the atomic bomb that ended World War II was completed. The other sites are Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Los Alamos, New Mexico.

The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan have voiced concerns about the park but have offered to provide artifacts and photos to show the bombs' effect on the two cities.

EDF Slumps on Report It Underestimated Cost of Waste Storage

Bloomberg Business

January 12, 2016

[LINK](#)

Electricite de France SA, the operator of 58 atomic reactors in France, dropped to a record in Paris trading after newspaper Les Echos said the utility may have underestimated the cost of storing its most radioactive waste.

EDF fell 4.4 percent to 11.96 euros on Tuesday, the lowest close since the stock began trading in the French capital in 2005.

France is seeking to store long-life radioactive waste from EDF's reactors, as well as from Areva SA and atomic-research organization CEA, at a site near Bure, which straddles the Meuse and Haute-Marne regions. Andra, the agency that manages nuclear waste, has put the cost of building and operating a deep storage facility at about 30 billion euros (\$32.6 billion), Les Echos reported, citing people it didn't identify. EDF, Areva and the CEA last year estimated the bill at about 20 billion euros.

"This report is clearly negative for all nuclear operators, and most specifically for EDF and Areva, but the risks of project-cost revaluation is not new," Xavier Caroen, an analyst at Bryan Garnier & Co., said in a research note.

Andra, EDF and Areva released a joint statement Monday, saying "the development and construction of the storage will be progressive over the entire operating lifespan, and will also include optimizations and innovations compared to the draft project, some of which are already identified."

EDF added in a statement Tuesday that it "remains convinced that optimizations should reduce the overall cost" of the project. The Paris-based utility, which has budgeted for a shared cost of 20.8 billion euros "under 2011 economic conditions," said it would reflect any new government estimate in its accounts.

EDF, Areva and the CEA are due to fund the storage facility using assets placed in dedicated funds. Construction of the first phase is scheduled for around 2021.

Mr. Moniz's Nuclear Warning

Wall Street Journal

January 12, 2016

[LINK](#)

North Korea's nuclear test last week is a reminder that we're living in a new era of nuclear proliferation. Now comes a warning from U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz that the Obama Administration is neglecting America's nuclear umbrella.

In a Dec. 23 letter that hasn't been publicly reported, Mr. Moniz asked White House budget director Shaun Donovan to reconsider the fiscal 2017 budget proposal due to Congress by Feb. 2. "It would not be responsible to submit a budget with such obvious programmatic gaps," he writes. Without an additional \$5.2 billion

for out-years 2018 to 2021, the budget will “lack credibility with Congress and stakeholders” and “fuel uncertainty” within the Energy Department’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

Mr. Moniz went on to note that “a majority of NNSA’s facilities and systems are well beyond end-of-life.” Also, “infrastructure problems such as falling ceilings are increasing in frequency and severity,” as more than 50% of facilities are at least 40 years old and nearly 30% date to World War II. “The entire complex could be placed at risk if there is a failure where a single point would disrupt a critical link in infrastructure.” Yet the White House is set to request only half the funding needed for facilities between 2018 and 2021.

Higher-tech parts of the system are struggling, too. “There has been a steady decline in the performance of the nuclear weapons computer codes needed to ensure the safety, security, and reliability of the nuclear stockpile,” Mr. Moniz wrote, but the current budget seeks less than a third of what’s needed, despite an executive order on “strategic computing” issued six months ago. He added that uranium-enrichment programs and satellite systems are short some \$715 million.

“Failure to address these requirements in the near term,” he warned, “will put the NNSA budget in an untenable position” by fiscal 2018. Energy Department officials didn’t respond to our requests for comment.

Mr. Moniz was Secretary of State John Kerry’s wingman in negotiating the nuclear deal with Iran, so he’s hardly a critic of Administration policy. Yet as even he is forced to note, “Events elsewhere in the world reaffirm the seriousness of the threat environment in which we live and underscore the need for a credible nuclear security program portfolio.”

President Obama entered office seeking to cut U.S. nuclear stockpiles in hopes of gaining “greater moral authority” against Iran and North Korea. In the 2010 New Start Treaty with Russia, he agreed to a 30% cut in warheads. The Senate ratified the treaty only after then Senator Jon Kyl secured a promise from Mr. Obama to modernize U.S. warheads and facilities.

Yet modernization budgets fell and crucial programs were delayed, including for replacement of aging Ohio-class nuclear-ballistic-missile submarines and construction of new plutonium-handling

facilities. Washington's arms-control champions have blocked new warhead construction and testing, so U.S. designs are decades old. Their reliability is assessed by computer simulations, not physical tests.

Modernization funding has risen since 2014, but Mr. Moniz's letter shows how much is still needed—and how low an Administration priority it remains. As former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates told Congress last autumn, the President's "political aspiration" is "to get rid of nuclear weapons," so he failed even in "trying to make the ones that we already have more reliable and safer."

This means the burden of preserving America's nuclear deterrent will fall to Mr. Obama's successor. In a recent debate, Republican frontrunner Donald Trump seemed to be unaware of America's "nuclear triad" of missiles based on land, in submarines and on planes. Hillary Clinton told a questioner in Iowa last week that spending a trillion dollars on nuclear modernization over 30 years "doesn't make sense to me."

Somebody needs to be serious about nuclear deterrence, and Mr. Moniz's letter is a warning that the task is urgent.