



Recommendation No. 12

November 28, 1995

High Level Waste Vitrification

As the result of operations at the Savannah River Site, the greatest risk to the public, workers and the environment are the chemical reprocessing wastes stored in the high-level waste (HLW) tank farms. A milestone in the Federal Facilities Agreement Part C has been negotiated with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and DOE-SR (Department of Energy-Savannah River) to remove and vitrify all of the HLW by the year 2028. DOE has stated a commitment to meet the 2028 date.

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board recognizes that, based on the current systems understanding and cost structures, Westinghouse Savannah River Company (WSRC) believes that the FY1997 budget represents a funding shortfall that will produce an operational attainment rate of only 17% for the Defense Waste Processing Facility (DWPF) to remove and vitrify HLW in a glass matrix. If this attainment rate becomes the long-term operational rate, HLW removal and vitrification would not be completed until the year 2065, or 37 years past the negotiated date.

1. Mindful of these facts, the SRS CAB recommends that DOE-SR and DOE-HQ meet their commitment to vitrify and remove all HLW by 2028. Their commitment should be a mandatory obligation that is fulfilled on time. Outside of operational safety at SRS, discharging this obligation should have the highest funding priority by DOE.
2. We also understand that DOE-SR is seeking to enhance productivity with alternative operational approaches in order to not only meet the 2028 commitment date, but to meet a target date of 2020. The CAB commends DOE-SR for these actions, and recommends that they continue to pursue these important activities. In addition, the CAB recommends that DOE-SR institute regular independent scientific peer reviews (ISPR) of the DWPF and the changes in its operations.

Agency Responses

[Department of Energy-SR \(1-19-96\)](#)

[Department of Energy-SR \(4-16-96\)](#)

[SCDHEC](#)