

Recommendation 336
Waste Management Milestones

Background

In 2015, it was reported that the Department of Energy missed goals in the ongoing clean-up process. The Department of Energy missed a milestone in October for the start-up of the salt-waste processing facility. For instance, in liquid waste vitrification, the Department planned to complete 156 canisters, however, only 93 were completed. A partial explanation provided was that canister production was impacted when an anti-foam chemical was added to the Defense Waste Processing Facility to keep the vessels from frothing. That chemical morphs into a flammable byproduct that can be processed and disposed of in the melter, however, it was discovered in other pieces of the process, and operations were slowed. The goal for the Saltstone process was to treat 1.2 million gallons of material in 2015, and the completed total amounted to 828,000 gallons. The Department of Energy reported trace amounts of mercury in the liquid waste, and that could have led to the slowing down of production.

Achieving cleanup goals will involve handling challenges and obstacles, according to the Department of Energy. In a recent report, the Department of Energy revealed its plan that Environmental Management will use newly developed multi-year planning tools to improve decision-making and better inform the continued dialogues with regulators and other stakeholders.ⁱ This includes improved prioritization to complete projects with the focus and oversight “required for success.”ⁱⁱ The Department of Energy concluded in their Year in Review that this oversight will lead to continued processing of tank waste and treatment.

Recommendations

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Energy:

1. Review and revise their process on how clean-up goals are set and by what means they will be implemented, so that they may more accurately present clean-up timelines to meet commitments made to the State of South Carolina.
2. Continue to work within their process to solicit the funds necessary to ensure that the clean-up process is fully funded and working at the maximum, safe, capacity.
3. Evaluate the possibility of using a different material, other than mercury, for the clean-up process.
4. Finally, with regard to the multi-year planning tool to improve dialogue and communication with stakeholders, continue to hold public outreach meetings (PODS) at least twice yearly to share activities and events happening in the clean-up process with the community.

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Adopted July 26, 2016

Sponsored by the Waste Management Committee

ⁱ <http://energy.gov/em/articles/doe-office-environmental-management-2015-year-review>

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