



### **Recommendation No. 99**

September 28, 1999

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### **Pollution Prevention at SRS**

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#### **Background**

An increased emphasis has been placed on preventing pollution and minimizing the amount of waste that has to be treated as low level radioactive waste at the Savannah River Site (SRS). This is known as the Pollution Prevention (P2)/Waste Minimization program. All material (shoe covers, plastic hoods, wipes, etc.) coming out of a Radiation Control Area, where work was done with radioactive materials, was treated as Low Level Waste (LLW) and disposed in the SRS LLW Burial Ground whether or not it was radioactive. In the early days of SRS, this practice was the most cost effective way of managing material from Radiation Control Areas. Today, however, it costs up to 1000 times or more to dispose of LLW in above-ground engineered vaults than to dispose of waste in a sanitary land fill.

With the goal of saving scarce funds, the P2 program has reduced the amount of material classified as LLW waste by 80% since 1990. Changes in work practices (e.g., using remote cameras instead of workers to survey areas, decontaminating material for free release) have eliminated 430,000 cubic feet of radioactive/hazardous waste since 1995. These changes have been accomplished by monitoring and segregating material from Radiation Control Areas, by reducing the number and sizes of the Radiation Control Areas, by developing new instrumentation and cleanup methods, and by training employees to be more aware. Currently the P2 program is saving four dollars for every dollar invested. An unexpected result is that worker productivity has increased by reducing the need to use personal protective equipment.

The SRS Pollution Prevention program is a site coordination function that serves to identify and fund those P2 projects that produce a high return on invested dollars. Projects are funded under site and DOE Headquarters National P2 program budgets. However, DOE National P2 program funding is being replaced entirely with site funding and accountability.

#### **Recommendation**

The SRS Citizens Advisory Board is very pleased with the present direction of the P2 program. In addition, we recommend that DOE:

1. Expand the program to dispose of the clean waste stream separately from the solid low level radioactive waste stream. Each stream should be optimized for the available disposal capacity.
2. Ensure that LLW is properly buried as LLW and that only clean waste is sent to sanitary landfills. The CAB requests a briefing within the next 6 months on the criteria that separates LLW from clean wastes and the lessons learned on separating clean waste from LLW.
3. Assure the CAB and the public that in view of DOE National P2 funding reductions, SRS will be able to find a source of funds to invest in future P2 projects.

#### **References**

Pollution Prevention at SRS... Demonstrating Environmental Stewardship, Presentation to the ER & WM Subcommittee, Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board by Keith Stone, June 22, 1999 .

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#### **Agency Responses**

[Department of Energy-SR](#)