



Savannah River Site Watch

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<https://srswatch.org/>

Columbia, South Carolina

Media Advisory

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**DOE, State of South Carolina Attempt to Reduce Chaos in DOE's Plutonium Management Programs,
Agree on Paper to Remove a Total of 11.5 metric Tons of Plutonium from Savannah River Site -
Decision on the Disposition of that Plutonium has been Anticipated for Years**

**>>> NOTE: DOE's Secret Plan is to Bring in 35 Metric Tons More of Plutonium for Processing for
Disposal and for Unjustified Fabrication into "Pits" for Nuclear Warheads at SRS – Discussion of Plans
will likely be Dodged at News Conference**

Columbia, SC – The U.S. Department of Energy and State of South Carolina will hold a news conference on August 31 at 11:00 a.m. at the state capitol in Columbia, SC to announce a settlement on paper for the removal of plutonium from the Savannah River Site. A local public interest group, Savannah River Site Watch, urges caution in what will be said as the plutonium-removal plans have been anticipated for years and as DOE won't mention plans to bring in a massive amount of plutonium to SRS in the future.

It is expected that nothing will be said at the news conference about plans to bring in an additional 35 metric tons of plutonium for processing as waste or fabrication into plutonium "pits" for nuclear warheads, according to the public interest group Savannah River Site Watch. The director of SRS Watch, Tom Clements, who has been tracking DOE's problem-plagued plutonium disposition efforts since 1994, will attend Monday's media event and be available for comment.

Currently, 11.5 metric tons of plutonium are stored in the old K-Reactor at SRS. Previously, a decision was made by DOE to "downblend" 6 metric tons of that surplus weapons plutonium with a secret, inert ingredient known as "stardust," for disposal as waste. On Friday, August 29, DOE issued a decision to downblend an additional 7.1 metric tons of plutonium, all for disposal as waste in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. (See links to the August 28 Federal Register notice and associated Supplement Analysis in "notes" below.)

"While today's announcement may sound good, SRS lacks downblending capacity and there is no schedule for the removal of the plutonium from SRS," said Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch. "DOE must immediately reveal the detailed plan for processing of the material and its removal from SRS and

reveal plans for future plutonium import. One thing is clear - absolutely no more plutonium must be brought into South Carolina until every gram now at the site has been removed.” added Clements. “While DOE and the State of SC may gloat over the announcement, the behind-the-scenes plan to bring a massive amount of plutonium for processing as waste and into pits for nuclear weapons must be fully revealed and explained by DOE,” said Clements.

“As DOE plans to dispose of 34 metric tons of plutonium as waste, approximately 27 more tons of plutonium would be brought in the state for downblending. Likewise, as DOE is pursuing an unjustified Plutonium Bomb Plant at SRS to make pits for nuclear weapons, that facility would require about 7.5 metric tons or more of plutonium to make about 2500 pits. Though it’s a startling amount, it appears DOE has quietly developed plans to bring an additional 35 metric tons of plutonium into South Carolina, some of which could end up being stranded here as we saw with the failed MOX project,” said Clements. “It is imperative that DOE immediately present a timetable for plutonium shipments to SRS, shipments out of the site and reveal where all this plutonium would be purified prior to processing at SRS,” added Clements.

SRS Watch has called for Programmatic Environmental Impact Statements (PEISs) on the plutonium disposition and pit fabrication projects. Those documents would analyze all DOE system-wide environmental and health impacts, the need for the projects and let South Carolinians know details about DOE’s plan to import a massive amount of plutonium to SRS.

SRS operated five nuclear reactors from the early-1950s to the mid-1980s, which produced about 36 metric tons of weapon-grade plutonium. Another 67 MT of plutonium were produced at DOE’s Hanford site in Washington State.

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Notes:

Federal Register notice, August 28, 2020, to dispose of an additional 7.1 MT of plutonium as waste: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-08-28/pdf/2020-19023.pdf>

Supplement Analysis for Disposition of Additional Non-Pit Surplus Plutonium, August 28, 2020: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/08/f77/eis-0283-sa-04-spd-2020.pdf>

Letter to DOE by SRS Watch, August 11, 2020 calling on a Programmatic EIS on the overall plutonium disposition program, which remains in some chaos: <https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Letter-SRS-Watch-to-DOE-on-need-for-PEIS-on-plutonium-disposition-August-11-2020.pdf>

Filing with federal appeal court of motion by DOE and the State of SC, July 30, 2020, agreeing to negotiate a settlement on plutonium removal: <https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/motion-staying-proceedings-to-Aug-31-case-19-2324-July-30-2020.pdf>

Court approval of the motion by DOE and the State of SC, August 4, 2020: <https://srswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/motion-granted-continuing-case-until-August-31-2020-dated-August-4-2020.pdf>