



## News from the Savannah River National Laboratory

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### Plutonium Package Certified

AIKEN, S.C. – After extensive work on design, testing and validation, the Savannah River Site has received certification on a radioactive materials package that will enable the safe transfer of plutonium metals from other Department of Energy (DOE) sites. The package, designated the “9975,” will be safely stored in the K Area Materials Storage facility. Transfer of these weapons useable materials is a prerequisite for the decommissioning and shutdown of these DOE facilities.

The 9975 is currently the only package certified for the shipment of plutonium metals. The availability of the package establishes a vital capability for the DOE Complex, enabling de-inventory of nuclear materials from Rocky Flats and other sites. According to Dr. James Shuler, one of the DOE regulators overseeing the radioactive packaging certification process, the 9975 “is destined to become the workhorse (package) for the DOE for the next decade.”

For ten years, personnel at the Savannah River Technology Center and radioactive material packaging users have been working on package designs to replace older – and now decertified – designs that were used to ship plutonium and uranium metals and oxides around the DOE complex. The original designs date back to the 1970s.

Shipping containers must undergo testing to demonstrate that they will withstand severe conditions under hypothetical accident scenarios without releasing their contents or losing their ability to provide effective shielding. SRS showed that the 9975 would maintain its performance ability under a hypothetical accident scenario, such as falling 30 feet onto an unyielding surface, bouncing in the air and hitting a broken axle stub, becoming engulfed in a diesel fire, and finally rolling into a ditch where it is covered by 3 feet of water.

The 9975 series of packages have been developed as general-purpose containers that are suitable for moving many materials, in addition to handling plutonium. The package has also been designed to accommodate the DOE’s “3013” container, which is used to store plutonium and uranium. Rocky Flats is expected to begin packaging and shipping plutonium metals, using the 9975 container, as soon as its stabilization and packaging system becomes operational this summer.

The recently issued certification for the 9975 authorizes transport of metals, which make up about one-third of Rocky Flats’ material intended for de-inventory. The next step is to obtain certification for transport of oxides, which make up the other two-thirds.

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