

SRS Salt Waste Processing Facility start-up testing is ahead of schedule

The Salt Waste Processing Facility (SWPF) at the Savannah River Site (SRS) is ahead of schedule for beginning operations, with contractor Parsons set to complete the last of the 60 individual systems tests in early November as part of accelerated startup and commissioning efforts that could bring the plant into operation as early as November 2018.

That would be nearly two months ahead of the baseline schedule to have the plant in operation by the end of 2018.

“From top to bottom, the Parsons team is focused on getting SWPF into operation as safely and efficiently as possible,” said Frank Sheppard, Parsons senior vice president and SWPF Project Manager. “The plant’s systems have performed well during testing and we are proud of the progress. But safety, not schedule, is our top priority. Safe execution of the startup is what will allow us to begin operations in 2018.”

Parsons completed construction of SWPF in April 2016, more than eight months ahead of the target schedule and more than \$65 million under the target cost. Since then, the project has been focused on testing and commissioning, in which components and systems are rigorously tested to ensure they meet DOE’s strict safety and design requirements for radioactive waste processing.

Once operational, SWPF will process the majority of the site’s salt waste inventory by treating highly radioactive salt solutions stored in underground tanks at SRS at 10 times the rate it is being



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The Salt Waste Processing Facility at the Savannah River Site.

processed today. Removing salt waste, which fills over 90 percent of tank space in the SRS tank farms, is a major step toward emptying and closing the site’s remaining 43 high-level liquid waste tanks.

Sheppard said the workforce has performed well during startup testing and

has “hit its stride” after the transition from construction activities to testing.

“The workforce has been doing an outstanding job and there have been no safety-related incidents since the initial transition,” Sheppard said. “We continue to improve our nuclear safety

culture posture and focus on disciplined operations. We really work hard to make sure every procedure is followed and if anyone has any uncertainty we stop, get the right kind of people involved and then move forward.”

As the schedule has accelerated, Parsons has hired an

additional 80-100 employees earlier than planned, mostly lab technicians and plant operators. Parsons has also had to accelerate its readiness activities and methods development for its analytical laboratory, which will not only analyze samples from SWPF but also will serve

other SRS projects.

“The acceleration has put some additional pressure on our readiness activities but we’ve been keeping up,” Sheppard said. “It’s a good problem to have and we are making full use of having those new employees on the project earlier than planned.”