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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SRNL Asked to Lead Independent Expert Review of Chemical Vapors and Worker Protection at DOE's Hanford Waste Tanks**



AIKEN, SC (April 25, 2014) -- Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) has asked Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) to establish and oversee a panel of external experts to examine hazardous chemical vapors management and related worker protection measures at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford nuclear waste cleanup site in Washington state.



WRPS is the DOE contractor responsible for the management and cleanup of millions of gallons of nuclear and hazardous waste currently stored in underground tanks at Hanford. SRNL is a multiprogram National Laboratory providing scientific and technical expertise to support DOE's Environmental Management program.

The request for the external review and accompanying recommendations comes after more than two dozen workers received medical attention this spring following apparent on-the-job exposures to vapors emanating from the waste storage tanks. WRPS has requested that this new study have an enhanced scope for analysis and recommendation beyond that of the two previous technical reviews of Hanford tank waste vapor policies and issues in 2008 and 2010.

"While a number of steps have been taken and improvements made in recent years to address chemical vapors hazards, the latest set of exposures shows that more work needs to be done. This new review, with its broad scope and the involvement of recognized experts,



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will make a difference in better protecting Hanford workers from future chemical vapor exposures,” said WRPS President and Project Manager Dave Olson.

Features of the panel’s work are expected to include:

- A review of the last four years of relevant technical data gathered as part of the WRPS industrial hygiene program and actions taken as a result;
- An overall examination of both the adequacy and implementation of present policies, protections, practices and responses to potential vapor exposures, particularly in light of the new exposures;
- A review of currently used and additional available technology that can provide protection against inhalation or other contact with tank vapors, including the use, effectiveness, and availability of personal protective equipment;
- A look at how to improve data collection, retention and analysis to assist in developing workforce and individual worker protection and health evaluation;
- A review of the response to past recommendations and their implementation and potential improvements, and
- Methods to institutionalize the knowledge and ongoing application of best practices in vapors protection and monitoring.

“SRNL’s role is to ensure that the best experts are brought in and given full latitude to ask hard questions and make their recommendations,” said Dr. Terry Michalske, Director of SRNL. “This is one more important way that the National Lab can provide relevant scientific and technical assistance for the safe execution of a critical DOE environmental management mission.”

SRNL will manage the interface of the panel with WRPS and will ensure that its report is made public. The final scope and schedule for the review will be developed in consultation with the expert panel. Any recommendations are entirely the domain of the expert panel.

The Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) is a multi-program applied research and development laboratory for the U.S. Department of Energy. SRNL applies state-of-the-art science and engineering to provide practical, high-value, cost-effective solutions for our nation’s environmental cleanup, nuclear security and clean energy challenges. Visit us on the web at <http://srnl.doe.gov>

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