

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NRC CHAIRMAN TO VISIT DOE SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson will visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River Site Thursday, December 3 and Friday, December 4 to tour portions of the facility and meet with site officials. In addition, Chairman Jackson will be available Friday at 12:30 p.m. to discuss her visit and answer questions from interested news media representatives.

The NRC is involved in a pilot program providing simulated oversight at the Savannah River Site's Receiving Basin for offsite fuel.

Savannah River is one of several sites which receive and manage spent fuel from defense and research reactor programs. In 1964, the Receiving Basin for Offsite Fuels, a water-filled spent fuel storage basin, received the first of approximately 1,600 casks of spent fuel from domestic and foreign research reactors. Fuel assemblies are stored in racks or baskets standing on the bottom of the basins.

The pilot program is authorized by a Memorandum of Understanding signed in November, 1997 by NRC Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson and former Energy Secretary Frederico F. Pena. The memorandum also authorizes pilot programs for simulated NRC oversight at several other DOE facilities and is considered to be an important step in assessing the desirability of NRC safety regulations at certain DOE sites. Full NRC regulation over certain DOE operations would require legislation and funding by Congress.

The pilot program is the result of a recommendation in December of 1995 by an advisory committee that DOE nuclear-related facilities be regulated by an external agency. A DOE working group later recommended that the NRC be the external regulator. During the pilot phase, which runs through late 1998, the program will use "simulated regulation," as defined in the MOU, to test regulatory concepts at DOE facilities by evaluating them against standards established by the NRC and focus on areas of the greatest safety significance.

Media representatives coming from Augusta should go south on Highway 125 past the Town of Jackson. Turn left on Road SR-1 at large blue "Savannah River Site" sign (do not go to the barricade). Travel east for about three miles and there will be several buildings and large parking lots on your right. Go past the entrance sign, turn

right at the "Aiken (parking) Lot" sign into the parking lot. Go to the end of the parking lot, turn right and media parking will be reserved. Enter at the gate in the green chain link fence into Building 703-41A. Security and public affairs representatives will be there to assist you.

To get there from Aiken, go south on Highway 19 past the Town of New Ellenton. Just after the traffic light that intersects Highway 278, there will be a large blue "Savannah River Site" sign. Turn right on Highway SR-1 (do not go to the barricade). Travel west for about five miles. Go past the traffic light, and turn left at the "Aiken (parking) Lot" sign into the parking lot. Go to the end of the parking lot, turn right and media parking will be reserved. Enter at the gate in the green chain link fence into Building 703-41A. Security and public affairs representatives will be there to assist you.

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EDITORS: A joint NRC/DOE web site has been established for the public to access information on the pilot program at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NMSS/doepilot.html>

The DOE media contact for Chairman Jackson's visit at the Savannah River Site is Bill Taylor, who can be reached at 803-725-2889.