

PCWR: Another Step in Reducing the Risk

The significance behind this important Savannah River Site waste tank milestone

By Allison Hamilton Molnar, PhD

CNTA exists to share the truth about nuclear.

The truth is that just over 200 million curies exist in radioactive liquid waste that is stored in underground tanks at the Savannah River Site (SRS). A curie is a unit of measurement for radioactivity—named for Marie Curie, who was a pioneer in many discoveries involving radioactive elements. This waste is mostly from years of nuclear material production during the Cold War era.

This waste is being dealt with—safely and efficiently. I want to commend the Department of Energy (DOE) for its recent noteworthy accomplishment, a landmark step in the tank closure process called Preliminary Cease Waste Removal (PCWR).

The milestone means that DOE, and its Liquid Waste operations contractor [Savannah River Mission Completion](#) (SRMC), [received approval in May](#) from its state and federal regulators that the waste from Tank 10 has successfully been removed.

In other words, real risk to the workers, the public, and the environment has been eliminated, as confirmed by the regulators.

SRMC may now proceed to the next step in the process to operationally close Tank 10. The next step is sampling and analysis to verify that the tank is within regulatory limits prior to final closure steps. The tank will be [officially closed](#) after workers fill it with specially formulated grout to seal and secure the tank sometime in the future.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control calls this radioactive waste the single greatest environmental risk to the State of South Carolina. That means that achieving PCWR is a big step in the process—one worth recognizing and appreciating.

So, congratulations and thank you to SRS team for achieving this important milestone in the radioactive waste cleanup at the Site. Your work is making our community safer and protecting those of us who live here.

And that's the truth.

Dr. Hamilton Molnar is the Executive Director for Citizens for Technology Awareness (CNTA). CNTA is an Aiken-based charitable educational organization dedicated to providing facts about nuclear topics and educating the public on nuclear issues.