



Savannah River Site Watch

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For Immediate Release Linked here:

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**DOE Notifies MOX Services that Contract to Construct Plutonium Fuel (MOX) Plant is Terminated;
Outlines Step to be Taken in Orderly, Final Closure of Bungled Project at Savannah River Site**

Letter Obtained by SRS Watch Anticipated after Oct. 9 Court Ruling Allowing Termination to Proceed

National Nuclear Security Administration MOX Termination Letter of October 10, 2018 Linked Here:

<https://tinyurl.com/yb3fa9ud>

Columbia, South Carolina – In a stunning yet expected move, the U.S. Department of Energy has formally informed the company constructing the problem-plagued plutonium fuel (MOX) project at Savannah River Site that the contract has been terminated and that closure of the project will immediately begin.

The October 10, 2018 letter, obtained by Savannah River Site Watch, was sent by DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration to MOX Services, the construction contractor for the project, the day after a federal court allowed termination of the project to proceed. Such a step was anticipated given that DOE, Congress and the White House have been anxious to stop MOX construction given massive cost overruns, schedule delays and construction problems.

"This letter makes it abundantly clear – the MOX boondoggle is finally over and done with and the next steps are an orderly shutdown of the bungled project," said Tom Clements, director of the public interest groups Savannah River Site Watch. "Taxpayers can now rest easier that their money will no longer be thrown down a black hole called MOX, which has not had a chance of being finished for quite some time." DOE had estimated the MOX construction project could cost \$17, with \$5 billion already wasted, and would not have been finished until 2048, if ever.

The letter states that "This notice will begin the process of winding down construction operations and preserving existed structures associated with the MOX facilities." Further, the letter stipulates steps to be taken by MOX Services in terminating the project and states that a "termination plan" will be sent to DOE in 30 days.

Additional comment by Tom Clements of Savannah River Site Watch:

The letter confirms that DOE is rapidly proceeding with termination of the MOX project, which is the correct but long overdue decision given massive cost overruns, significant schedule delays and crippling construction problems. Termination of the bungled project should have been carried out years ago but that was blocked by self-serving politicians until now. As termination proceeds, I hope that MOX workers are given ample notice of job termination and are provided adequate termination packets and help in finding other jobs at SRS or elsewhere. Concerning repurposing of the MOX facility for any other purpose, including production of plutonium pits for nuclear weapons, preparation of a full Environmental Impact Statement process with public participation will have to be pursued.

MOX Services is directed by NNSA to take action so that “the current workforce will refocus their efforts on preserving the construction site in a safe and secure manner.”

The termination notice goes on to state that “over the next four months the site will seal openings, restock equipment and materials, and install necessary temporary lighting to support maintenance and surveillance of the facility.” The partially constructed MOX building has a number of Temporary Construction Opening (TCOs) which expose the facility to outside air and which must be closed to protect the facility.

The notice includes a list of steps to be taken in the orderly project closure, including communicating with subcontractors about project closure, documenting closure activities and maintaining certain records.

Importantly, the notice states that workers be given “maximum practical advance notice of the employment reductions.” SRS Watch supports ample severance packages for workers and assistance in finding jobs at SRS or elsewhere.

DOE has indicated it wants to “repurpose” the MOX facility to make plutonium “pits” for nuclear weapons but such a move will require preparation a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), with public participation and comments. Such an EIS will take years to begin and complete.

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Notes:

NNSA letter to MOX Services MOX contract termination, dated October 10, 2018

Ruling by Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, allowing MOX termination to proceed, October 9, 2018:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/court_order_october_9_2018.pdf

SRS Watch news release on Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, October 10, 2018

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/srs_watch_news_on_court_ruling_on_mox_termination_october_10_2018.pdf

SRS Watch news release of September 28, 2018, on oral arguments before Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, with links to key documents, including to mp3 file of Sept. 27, 2018 oral arguments:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/savannah_river_site_watch_on_mox_termination_court_hearing_of_september_27_2018.pdf

Appeal by DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration, requesting that Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals overturn district court "stay" halt to termination of MOX project, September 28, 2018:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/appeal_to_stay_district_court_mox_ruling_nnsa_sept_28_2018.pdf

Response by State of South Carolina to NNSA appeal, October 3, 2018:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/state_of_sc_filing_against_nnsa_appeal_on_mox_termination_oct_3_2018.pdf

Additional filing by NNSA, in response to State of South Carolina, October 4, 2018:

http://www.srswatch.org/uploads/2/7/5/8/27584045/nnsa_response_on_mox_stay_4th_circuit_october_4_2018.pdf