

# SRSRA NEWSLETTER

For SRS Retiree Association Members      Bob & Pat Stokes, Editors      Volume 15      October-November 2002

## **HEADLINES FOR MEMBERS TO NOTE**

**TIME TO RENEW YOUR SRSRA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2003**

**CALL FOR NOMINEES FOR THE SRSRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**NOVEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING ON NOVEMBER 12, 2002**

**ANNUAL MEETING PLANNED FOR MARCH 11, 2003 AT AIKEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

## INSIDE INSIGHT

Chairman's Letter	1	SRSRA Membership Communications	7
Pension Related News	2	SRSRA Members Lost in the Internet	7
Call for Board of Directors Nominations	3	SRSRA Comments to the NNSA on MPF	8
ORA Activities	4	Benefits Contacts	9
Medical Benefits Issue	4	Membership Dues Renewal Form	10
SRS Activities	5		

### **Chairman's Letter**

We hope that many of you took note of the newspaper announcement and attended the October 29, 2002, DOE Public Meeting on the proposed Modern Pit Facility (MPF). The SRSRA management sent email notices to many of you suggesting this was a worthwhile way to show our continuing support for locating new missions at Savannah River Site. The SRSRA is supportive of new facilities and programs that mean new jobs for SRS. It is our hope that the MPF will be built at the Savannah River Site.

DOE/HQ recently announced a "Notice of Intent" to prepare a Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed MPF. This is a major step forward in the process to locate this new facility. Public meetings are being held in the vicinity of the 5 sites being evaluated to discuss issues and for DOE to receive comments on the scope of the EIS. The estimated cost for the facility is in the 2 to 4 billion dollar range and will employ around 1000 people when operational. Your support will be most welcome. If you missed the meeting, you can still provide your input by email or regular mail at the following addresses (email: [James.Rose@nnsa.doe.gov](mailto:James.Rose@nnsa.doe.gov) or direct mail: Mr. Jay Rose, NA-53, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20585). The SRSRA leadership hopes you will find this issue important enough for you to voice your opinion. We also hope that your opinion will be in support of the facility! **Please address your comments to the addresses above before November 22, 2002. (see SRSRA BOD comments later)**

With the Pension Adjustment or ADHOC COLA behind us, your Board of Directors (BOD) moved to refocus the SRSRA this past meeting. Committees reporting to the BOD will be charged to expand membership and develop agendas for BOD approval. Medical benefits is a prime example of an area we need to monitor more closely. Email exchanges by your BOD in recent days have identified many issues requiring attention. We need a BOD member to volunteer for Chair of the Benefits Committee. Currently, yours truly is shown as chair of this committee; and quite frankly, I do not have the time needed to do the job properly. For example, as retirees we seem to become aware of benefit changes and coverage issues only by our experiences in dealing with medical providers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield and/or Site Benefits representatives. We must establish mechanisms for our members to communicate experiences to the Benefits committee. Once benefits issues are identified and addressed, the entire membership must be advised.

I urge you to become involved in the SRSRA. It is your organization. **WE NEED YOU** to participate in our refocusing program. Please attend the board meetings typically scheduled the first Tuesday of each month at the Aiken Knights of Columbus. (Meeting dates are shifted occasionally to accommodate holidays and other conflicts.) Call your Chairman or any BOD member to confirm the meeting date and place. **This month the BOD meeting will be shifted to November 12 to avoid a conflict with election day voting events that are taking place at the Knights of Columbus Hall.**

Sincerely,

Dave Cowfer, Chairman  
Savannah River Site Retirees Association

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### **Pension Related News**

#### **Proposed coalition of DOE site retiree organizations**

There have been very preliminary discussions between the Oak Ridge retiree organization and the SRSRA about joining together with contractor retiree organizations from other DOE sites to form a coalition of DOE site retiree organizations. The stated purpose of the Coalition would be to work together for the common good of contractor retirees by presenting a larger, more unified front for future retiree efforts. Potential objectives could include periodic pension reviews to support future efforts to obtain pension adjustments as well as working to protect medical and other retiree benefits.

We have also learned that several members of congress with DOE sites in their districts have formed a DOE FACILITIES CAUCUS. Zack Wamp of Tennessee and Heather Wilson, a Congresswoman from the Albuquerque, New Mexico area, are co-chairs of the DOE Caucus. Congressman Graham is currently a member of the DOE Caucus.

#### **Deferred Vested Pension Benefit recipients did not receive a pension increase**

The individuals who did not receive a pension adjustment are primarily DuPont retirees who rehired with WSRC in 1989 and the nuclear navy retirees, many of whom were hired during the K-Reactor startup effort. According to the WSRC Pension Plan Booklet such individuals fit the Plan category of Deferred Vested. The

Plan Booklet states that, "If you terminate from the Company after you have completed at least five years of Eligibility Service, but before you are eligible to retire, you are entitled to a Deferred Vested Pension Benefit. However, your pension benefit is postponed until you attain the age [age 65 if you have less than 30 years of service] to be eligible to receive benefits." All other Pension Benefit categories [Normal Retirement, Early Retirement, Optional Retirement and Incapability Retirement] require at least 15 years of Eligibility Service. Technically, per the Plan, **Deferred Vested individuals receive a pension benefit but are not retirees.**

In reviewing correspondence on this subject, the WSRC letter of 4/9/2001 (Greenquist to Lander) states in the last sentence of the first page that Buck Associates excluded deferred vested pensioners in developing their COLA model since they **typically** are not granted COLAs. In addition, the 8/7/02 letter to retirees, which announced the COLA, states in the first paragraph that the COLA does not apply to former employees who are receiving a **deferred vested pension**. It appears that WSRC's intent, to exclude deferred vested pensioners, was documented.

The individuals who made this exclusion decision were not around in 1989/90 when a major effort was made by WSRC and DOE to retain the DuPont retirees as rehires and to recruit personnel with nuclear navy experience to provide technical expertise. With the passage of time and with several management changes, the importance of the deferred vested employees may have been diminished.

**SRSRA Leadership and the pension committee believe that this approach (WSRC denying deferred vested pensioners the pension increase) is not in the spirit of the agreement we made with Bob Pedde and Lindsey Graham.** Your SRSRA leadership is reviewing all information and will be approaching WSRC to discuss the exclusion of this important group of deferred vested employees in the pension increase program. We will keep you posted on progress on this issue. We expect this will be part of the refocusing effort as discussed in the Chairman's letter.

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### Call for Board of Directors Nominations

**Are You Willing and Able?** If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors of the SRS Retiree Association or would like to nominate someone to serve on the Board contact Nick Kuehn at (803) 648-2849 or E-mail to: [nhkuehn3@msn.com](mailto:nhkuehn3@msn.com) by February 1, 2003. Anyone who is nominated will be contacted to determine if he or she is willing to serve if elected. Board members serve for two years and are eligible to stand for reelection for additional terms. Candidates will appear on the ballot at the annual meeting in March 2003. Fifteen Board members will be elected at the annual meeting next March. Board members are expected to attend a monthly meeting on the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 am. In addition, they will assist in promoting the goals of the SRS Retiree Association and serve on one of the working committees. The Board continuously recruits new members and the BOD is the pool from which officers for the SRSRA are chosen. Generally, Board members can expect to spend two to five hours on Retiree Association business per month. However, some Retiree Association programs might require additional time during a given month.

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## **ORA Activities**

Retirees may be interested in purchasing a 2003 Entertainment Book from the ORA. These books contain a few hundred buy one get one free coupons for a wide variety of local restaurants, sporting events and cultural programs. In addition, they provide hotel and travel discounts throughout the US. The \$25 cost for these books will be recovered many times over by the average family. They may be purchased for the next few weeks by calling Ben Burnau at 952-9866.

All retirees who are getting SUNCOM cellular service through the ORA should check their bills to make certain that the 7% discount is being applied. A new billing system went into effect a couple months ago and the discount didn't get applied to many bills. If there is any problem with your bill, call the SUNCOM Financial Services Group at the number listed on your monthly statement and it will be corrected.

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## **Medical Benefits Issue**

**Notice : This information applies to retirees living in areas outside South Carolina.**

You may be eligible for higher BC/BS "covered expenses". When you are on Medicare, BC/BS becomes the "Secondary" insurer.

To receive proper handling of your secondary claim it needs to be directed to the following address.

BlueCross / BlueShield of South Carolina  
Medicare Secondary Claims  
Mail Code AF-750  
Columbia SC 29219

Failure to mail the claim to the above address has in some cases resulted in claims being processed as if they were "Out-of-Network" claims. This leads to the retiree paying more out-of-pocket. SRSRA members living in Texas, North Carolina, and California have brought this issue to our attention. The SRSRA, in turn, requested that Savannah River Site and BC/BS officials help to resolve the problem. They have responded in the following way. The problem resolution will be done in two steps:

**Step 1)** Send all claims to the above address until Step 2 occurs;

**Step 2)** An enhancement to the Blue Card (out of area) system is scheduled for March of 2003 that will enable doctors/providers in other states to file Medicare secondary claims through their local plan. The above Step 2 represents enhancements to the BC/BS computer system that will allow them to receive electronic filings of Medicare secondary claims from out of area providers.

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## SRS Activities

### **First DWPF melter ends successful run after eight years**

The heart of SRS's Defense Waste Processing Facility, its 65 ton melter, is being replaced after an extensive operating run of more than three times its design life. The melter was estimated to have a design life of about 2 years when it was installed during testing in 1994. Today, after more than 8 years of continuous operation, including 6 years of radioactive operations, the original melter is being shut down and a new melter will be installed to continue vitrification of the Site's high level waste inventory. "This is an incredible operational run for this melter", said Steve Piccolo, V.P. and General Manager of the High Level Waste Division. "It's a tribute to our employees who worked so hard to keep the facility operating safely and getting the most out of the equipment."

The plan had been to operate the melter as long as possible, giving engineers a chance to observe how it could falter in its later life, and what to look out for in future melter operations. Earlier this month a decision was made to end the melter's operation as several recent equipment issues were affecting the facility throughput. An associated heater stopped working and the Slurry Mix Evaporator (SME) is in need of replacement. The heaters help keep the pool of super-heated waste hot in the melter. The SME is a 10,000 gallon, stainless steel vessel that is used in the DWPF process to mix ground frit, a borosilicate glass, with HLW.

The second melter is ready to be put into place. Since the new melter is the first to be changed during radioactive operations, it's estimated that it will take 4 to 6 months to remove the old melter, install the new one, test it and return to normal operations. By safely extending the original melter's life, SRS has saved millions in taxpayer dollars and stays on course to empty waste tanks. Melters cost about \$20 million each. Many congratulations to Steve Piccolo and his team, together with all the **SRSRA members** involved in the design, construction, and operation of DWPF.

### **SRS radiation doses remain low for the off site public**

A recently released report shows that potential off-site impacts from operations at SRS remain low. According to the 2001 SRS Environmental Report, the largest radiation dose that any single off-site individual could have received is estimated to be **0.18 millirem**. This dose, which remained the same as the 2000 figure, compares well when given the annual "natural dose" of approximately **300 millirem** per individual member of the public. WSRC emphasizes that compliance with environmental regulations and with DOE Orders related to environmental protection provides assurance that on-site processes do not adversely impact the environment. WSRC also reports that the Site had a National Pollution System compliance rate of 99.6% in 2001. This system protects streams, reservoirs, and other wetlands by limiting all non-radiological releases. Discharge limits are set for each facility to ensure that SRS operations do not negatively impact aquatic life or degrade water quality.

Effluent monitoring and environmental surveillance were conducted extensively within a 2000-square mile network reaching out 25 miles from the SRS – with some as far out as 100 miles from the site. In addition, SRS did not receive any notices of violation (NOV) under the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act, or the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

## **Environmental restoration program passes five-year safety milestone**

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, SRS's Environmental Restoration Program passed five years without a work-related lost time injury or illness. The program encompasses all employees of the ER Division plus others who work on the program – construction workers, Radiological Protection Department employees, subcontractors, etc., which altogether averages about 450 people. The five-year milestone represents approximately 4,375,000 safe hours of work. Workers in equivalent construction-type work outside of SRS would be expected to experience approximately 18 lost time injuries each year during this same period of time. This is a highly enviable record for the SRS team in these activities.

## **Final remediation set for SRS's old radioactive burial ground (ORBG).**

The final clean-up of the highest priority waste site at SRS can begin shortly, thanks to an agreement between DOE, S. Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DEHEC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed in September. The ORBG has the Site's highest concentration of radionuclides that could be released to the environment. Per DOE spokesman Tom Heenan, "We are moving quickly to reduce the risk and achieve closure, and putting the brakes on migration of wastes into groundwater". Through a Record of Decision signed by EPA and SCDHEC, the plan calls for the consolidation of radioactive waste materials. These materials are mostly soils from four relatively small nearby waste sites, which will be added into the ORBG. With the incorporation of waste materials from the smaller sites, the Burial Ground Closure will be called the General Separations Area Consolidation Unit. A protective geo-synthetic cap will be placed over the burial ground, followed by a layer of soil and vegetation. The decision to cap the unit protects workers from the risks of exposure that would exist using more invasive options. A project is already operating to reduce tritium migration via groundwater to a site stream from the Burial Ground.

## **Efforts underway at SRS could lead to cleaner energy sources**

According to Bill Magwood, Director of DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy, Science and Technology, cutting the U.S.A.'s dependence on foreign oil and reducing greenhouse gases can each be accomplished if the country can find a way to generate enough hydrogen. In a presentation to the local CNTA, Magwood said he planned to review local efforts in hydrogen technology during his visit to SRS, particularly efforts being undertaken at SRTC. He indicated that these activities at SRTC could help lead to cleaner energy. Plentiful nuclear generation of hydrogen fuel is the only way this country could feed its needs. That's the way you really cut greenhouse gases. In early October it was announced that SRTC had been awarded funding for a 3 year study of technical and economic issues associated with an approach that could be used to produce hydrogen using the heat from a nuclear reactor to break down water into hydrogen and oxygen.

Another reason for Magwood's visit to SRS is to see how the Site can help in advance fuel cycle missions which are about to be funded. Under the program, the U.S. will look at advanced fuel technologies such as fast reactors. He indicated that this basically puts this country back in the business of fuel reprocessing. Another program being undertaken by DOE is the Nuclear Power 2010 initiative, in which DOE is working with private sector partners to build new nuclear power plants. Currently, Dominion Energy, one of four DOE-selected partners, is looking at SRS as a possible location of a new nuclear power reactor. Standing in the way of building new reactors to generate power is the financial impacts of such decisions, such as dips in stock prices that follow such announcements. Magwood concluded by saying that areas where nuclear operations are

currently underway or have been done in the past are much more receptive to new nuclear plants being constructed than other areas.

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### **SRSRA Membership Communications**

The attempts to improve communications with members through the Internet continue to experience problems. Many members have changed Internet Service Providers (ISP) and that invalidates the email addresses the SRSRA currently has. Still other members have ISPs that limit the size of communications they may receive. Those ISP providers limit either the size of the message (our newsletter for example) or the size of the distribution attached to the communication (our large membership email listing e.g.).

The recent attempt to alert SRSRA members in the CSRA to the Modern Pit Facility meeting was hampered by incorrect email addresses and by certain ISPs for too large a distribution list. We will continue to use hard copy mail of the newsletter to ensure you receive this important membership communication. Please tell us if you move and your home address changes.

We will work on ways to solve the Internet problem of email communications that are too large. But you can help as well. If you are a new member, or you are new to the Internet email system, please provide your email address to [rastokes@prodigy.net](mailto:rastokes@prodigy.net). If you are a current member and your email address is changing or has changed recently, please send your new address to [rastokes@prodigy.net](mailto:rastokes@prodigy.net). You can also send a message to the [srsretirees@lycos.com](mailto:srsretirees@lycos.com) email address to further ensure your information gets to the SRSRA organization.

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### **Members lost to the Mysteries of the Internet World** (send updated information to [rastokes@prodigy.net](mailto:rastokes@prodigy.net))

Frank L. Givens	Rheta B. Woodard	Eugene C. Petit	Gayle K. Hovey
Ted S. DeHart	W. Nevyn Rankin	G. Gregg Pennington	Marcia H. Scaggs
Ratilal C. Rami	Robert C. Ruff, Sr.	Joseph F. Ryan	Robert A. Scaggs
Joseph M. Weaver	Rodney D. Martz	Ted Bondor	William R. Scoggins
David C. Woodard	Doris B. Napier	John R. Kosko	David L. Hartman

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**SRSRA Comments to the NNSA on the Modern Pit Facility**

Mr. Jay Rose, NA 53  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

**SUBJECT: Comments to the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Public Meeting in North Augusta, South Carolina on October 29, 2002**

Dear Mr. Rose:

I am Robert A. Stokes. I reside in Aiken, South Carolina. I am here tonight representing the Savannah River Site Retiree Association (SRSRA). I am a Vice Chairman of that organization and I am here this evening at the request of the Board of Directors of the SRS Retiree Association.

SRSRA was founded in 1998 and is the largest retirement organization formally registered in the state of South Carolina. Currently this retiree organization has 550 active members and represents a retiree group of nearly 1500 personnel. A majority of the members reside here in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). The SRSRA would like to add our voice and our support to your deliberations concerning a location for the Modern Pit Facility (MPF). **The retiree organization fully supports the concept of locating and operating this facility at the Savannah River Site.**

I mention the “and operating” which most people would consider an obvious conclusion. **If you build it here, you will operate it here.** But as recent history has shown us, there are many sites interested in welcoming the large dollar construction investment and the jobs and people that those investment dollars bring into an area; but when it comes time to operate the facility, roadblocks are erected to slow or stop operation of the facility. You will not find that environment in the CSRA. **The local community has supported and will continue to support SRS operations, both old and new.**

We believe this site represents the “**best of the best**” in the DOE complex. The wealth of trained manpower, exceptional manufacturing and production capabilities and the existing security force are all outstanding. **These resources plus the resounding support of the local population to the Savannah River Site operations should make this site your prime choice for locating this new facility.**

Respectfully,

*Original signed by R.A. Stokes*

Robert A. Stokes, Vice Chairman,  
Savannah River Site Retiree Association



## Benefits Contacts

**People Support Service Center (a one-stop service for most HR and payroll activities and questions)**

- ◆ **803-725-7772 (local area SC and GA)**
- ◆ **800-368-7333 (long distance)**
- ◆ [service-center@srs.gov](mailto:service-center@srs.gov) (for email contact with this new service)

**Please use the information above for future contacts with WSRC concerning your Human Resources or payroll issues and other general questions. Please give us your feedback on this new service.**

◇ **Life, Health, Dental**

Kathy Hutto (803) 725-9545  
Becky Proveaux (803) 725-0526  
Greg Murray (803) 725-0531

◇ **Pension**

John Felkel (803) 725-7722  
Viola Best (803) 725-1900

◇ **SIP Service Center** (800) 360-2747

◇ **Internal Medicine Partners** (706) 792-5075  
(Physical Examinations)

◇ **Blue Cross/Blue Shield of SC**

1-800-325-6596  
Option 1 for Medical  
Option 2 for Dental  
Option 3 for Pre-Cert/Med Authorization

◇ **Value Options** (mental health & substance abuse assistance) 1-800-333-6557

◇ **BAC (Westinghouse Corporate Pension)**  
1-800-581-4222

◇ **Safety Eyeglass Office**  
Tom Cuny (803) 725-3379

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### SRSRA Board of Directors Contacts: (\* = members whose term ends in March, 2003)

Dick Barclay (803-641-1029)	Harry Ledbetter* (803-649-9785)	Diane Grant* (706-733-8944)
Dave Cowfer (803-641-1056)	Art Hadden (803-471-3660)	Tom Greene* (803-279-5628)
John Church (803-648-1260)	Stan Smith (603-648-5676)	Don Grogan* (803-279-5803)
Sid Curry (706-863-2372)	Bob Stokes (803-649-3362)	Paul Katonak* (803-649-9457)
Mike French (803-642-0735)	Joe Bickley* (803-279-4600)	Nick Kuehn* (803-648-2849)
Jim Gibbons (803-648-8135)	Art Blanchard* (803-642-9117)	Ray Perks* (803-642-8654)
Sam Goforth (803-649-6807)	Fred Cavanaugh* (803 649-1583)	Bill Quinn* (803-642-9314)
Al Hunter (803-648-8038)	Gerry Croom* (803-279-2255)	Ray Sabol* (803-648-6950)
John Jones (803648-5442)	George Duke* (803-345-5785)	Chuck Seitter* (803-642-7836)
Frank Langford (803-642-5596)	Frank Givens* (803-279-1598)	Tom Hendrix (803-279-9507)

**MEMBERSHIP:**

SRSRA was founded in 1998 and is the largest retirement organization formally registered in the state of South Carolina. SRSRA representatives hold frequent meetings with senior DOE and WSRC Team staff at SRS, as well as members of the South Carolina and Georgia congressional delegations. The keynote speakers at our recent Annual Meeting were Congressman Lindsey Graham and WSRC President Bob Pedde.

**The SRSRA can be your voice with the site and with the local congressional representatives. SRSRA keeps abreast of activities and issues concerning retirees. TODAY WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO JOIN THE SRSRA!**

**YOUR REMINDER: IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2003! PLEASE COMPLETE THE MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM BELOW AND RETURN WITH YOUR CHECK FOR YOUR 2003 MEMBERSHIP DUES. PLEASE REMIND OTHER RETIREES, WHO MAY NOT BE AWARE OF THE SRSRA ORGANIZATION AND ITS OBJECTIVES, TO CONTACT RAY PERKS (TEL. 803-642-8654) TO GET ON THE MEMBERSHIP LIST. CALL Ray Perks 803 642 8654**

Return to: **SRS Retiree Association  
P. O. Box 5686  
Aiken, S.C. 29804**

- .....
- \_\_\_\_\_ Please send me more information on the SRSRA.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want to join as a member in SRSRA. I would serve on the SRSRA BOD. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
- \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, my SRS retired spouse wants to join as a member in SRSRA and would serve on the SRSRA BOD. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Annual Dues: Year 2003**

**Year 2004**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| _____ \$15 for Retiree                                    | _____ \$15 for Retiree                                    |
| _____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (if also retired from SRS) | _____ \$0 for Retiree's Spouse (if also retired from SRS) |
| _____ \$5 for Retiree's Survivor Spouse                   | _____ \$5 for Retiree's Survivor Spouse                   |

RETIREE NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SPOUSE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

RETIREE RETIRED FROM: WSRC \_\_\_\_\_ BSRI \_\_\_\_\_ BWXT-SRC \_\_\_\_\_ BNFL-SRC \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

RETIREE'S SPOUSE RETIRED FROM: WSRC \_\_\_\_\_ BSRI \_\_\_\_\_ BWXT-SRC \_\_\_\_\_ BNFL-SRC \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

RETIREE DATE OF RETIREMENT \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

RETIREE'S SPOUSE DATE OF RETIREMENT \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: **SRS Retiree Association                      P. O. Box 5686                      Aiken, S.C. 29804**