

SPRU BUILDING DEMOLITION BEGINS

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Environmental Management Separations Process Research Unit (SPRU) Field Office in Niskayuna, New York, has taken possession of the former SPRU nuclear facilities at the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory (KAPL) site. SPRU is a group of inactive facilities and structures, safely maintained at KAPL. These facilities had previously been managed by contractors for the DOE Office of Naval Reactors, which maintains the majority of the KAPL site. SPRU was part of KAPL's early history, when KAPL was a general-purpose laboratory for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.

SPRU was built in the late 1940s and operated through the early 1950s to conduct pilot tests for recovery of uranium and plutonium. The nuclear facilities at SPRU consist of a process research and office building (known as G2), a waste processing building (H2), and associated tanks, tunnels and outbuildings. Following cessation of SPRU operations, KAPL converted some of Building G2 to office space, and continued using Building H2 for waste processing. In 1999, KAPL announced that it had no further use for the SPRU facilities. The following year, DOE began characterizing the SPRU areas as part of the SPRU Disposition Project.

In December 2007, DOE awarded a task order to Washington Group International (WGI) to decontaminate the SPRU facilities, demolish them, remove contaminated soil around the facilities, and remove the resulting waste from the site. Since that time WGI has been mobilizing at the site and has been developing the programs (including worker safety and radiation protection) that will be used to carry out the work safely and effectively.

The Office of Naval Reactors transferred Building G2 to the DOE SPRU Field Office and WGI in December, and transferred the remainder of the facilities on April 13. WGI has begun characterizing the facilities for radioactivity, asbestos and other hazardous materials, and has started removing materials from building G2. The first shipment of waste from G2, consisting of fluorescent light bulbs, took place on April 27.

The current schedule calls for building demolition and cleanup of contaminated soil around the buildings to be complete in late 2011. Following the completion of the demolition and cleanup, and sampling to ensure that cleanup levels have been met, the land will be transferred back to the Office of Naval Reactors for their continuing use.