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Orano TN Completes Total Transfer of Used Nuclear Fuel Ahead of Schedule at Fort Calhoun Nuclear Generating Station

Expertise and site teamwork help complete fuel transfer from storage pool to dry storage on budget and more than two weeks ahead of schedule.

BETHESDA, Md., May 18, 2020 – With 18 days to spare, Orano TN recently completed the two-year dry storage system installation and pool-to-pad campaign at the shutdown Fort Calhoun Nuclear Generating Station in Blair, Nebraska. The team achieved an average 4-day loading cycle for each used fuel canister—one of the industry's fastest times—and a total project dose less than the stringent target goal.

Under the 2018 contract with Omaha Public Power District, Orano's scope included expanding the site's existing NUHOMS® dry storage system and performing all pool-to-pad transfer services. In addition, Orano conducted an extensive inspection of the emptied used fuel pool with underwater cameras and radiation detectors to ensure that all fuel debris had been collected and loaded into the NUHOMS canisters.

The 32 NUHOMS horizontal dry storage modules were cast on site in only eight months using local providers for thousands of yards of concrete, machine shop fabrication, and many other project services. With a strong focus on safety and quality during all the onsite activities, including the casting and pool-to-pad activities, more than 100,000 man-hours were completed without a personnel safety incident.

"Completing this project safely, on-time and on-budget required a true collaborative effort between OPPD and Orano TN," said Tim Uehling, Senior Director, Fort Calhoun Station Decommissioning. "This major accomplishment demonstrates the care and commitment of all those involved throughout the project. OPPD's customer-owners can be assured of the continued safe, secure storage of fuel in the robust dry storage system provided by Orano TN."

By completing the loading campaign earlier than scheduled, the shutdown site can begin reducing significant costs associated with managing used fuel in wet storage and to initiate the next stages in the site's decommissioning.

"The keys to the success of this loading campaign were the strong working relationship between the Fort Calhoun and TN teams, and the certainty provided by our efficient NUHOMS technology," said Amir Vexler, U.S. president of Orano TN. "The teams' exceptional coordination, initiative, and professionalism overcame some unusual challenges, including flooding from the Missouri river during the training and dry run sessions in 2019, severe winter storms, and implementing pandemic safety requirements."

With the completion of the Fort Calhoun loading campaign, Orano has successfully performed the most total pool offloads in the U.S. industry, representing work at three shutdown reactors, and all of these offloads were completed ahead of target schedules and without regulatory issues.

The NUHOMS dry storage canisters were manufactured in the U.S. at Orano's TN-Fabrication facility in Kernersville, North Carolina.

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About Orano TN: Orano TN operates in the U.S. as TN Americas, which is a subsidiary of Orano USA, with more than 55 years of experience providing nuclear packaging and transportation solutions for its customers worldwide. Globally, Orano TN conducts more than 5,000 transports of used nuclear fuel and radioactive material packages worldwide, while meeting the highest international security requirements.

About Orano USA: Orano USA is a leading supplier of nuclear fuel materials, used fuel management, decommissioning, decontamination, and radwaste treatment solutions to U.S. commercial and federal customers. Orano USA, through its subsidiary Orano Med in Texas, is developing cancer treatments using targeted radio-immunotherapy, with its first drug currently in FDA-authorized clinical trials.

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