

[The Augusta Chronicle](#)

# SRS subcontractors tighten worker certification

## Some workers must file proof

By Rob Pavey | Staff Writer  
Thursday, November 12, 2009

Employees of Savannah River Site subcontractors are facing tighter scrutiny in the wake of a federal audit that found instances where eligibility of foreign workers was not properly verified.

"We found that not all site subcontractors verified employment eligibility in accordance with federal requirements," says a new report from the U.S. Energy Department's Office of Inspector General. "This condition allowed the possibility that individuals who are not eligible to work in the United States could be employed by department subcontractors and potentially access the site."

The report, using data collected during the second half of 2008, noted that federal authorities had "previously identified concerns regarding foreign employee access at a National Nuclear Security Administration site" and were taking steps to avoid further problems.

The audit at SRS included checks on 600 federal employment eligibility verification, or "I-9" forms, of which 136 --- or 22 percent --- were "missing key elements, including the subcontractor's affirmation that the identity documentation was reviewed and appeared authentic; and, the employee's signature to affirm that the employment information was correct."

The inspectors also found inconsistencies with Social Security numbers used by 16 of 60 employees randomly checked.

"We identified through a judgmental sample that 16 subcontractor employees may have had their Social Security numbers used by other people in the general population not associated with the Department," the report said. "Our review revealed no evidence that the 16 subcontractors were using fraudulent numbers."

The findings were shared immediately with the Savannah River Operations Office and the National Nuclear Security Administration, whose contracting officer issued a letter to the Mixed Oxide Fuel Facility contractor asking for help in making subcontractors aware of employment eligibility laws.

"The letter also notified the contractor that some of the subcontractors working on the site were not complying with statutory requirements to verify that employees are U.S. citizens or are otherwise legally entitled to employment in the United States," the audit said.

The Inspector General's recommendations included devising a method to notify all subcontractors of applicable laws related to employment verification; and the creation of a specific process to notify contractors of a new federal verification system, known as "E-verify," that went into full implementation on Sept. 9.

SRS spokesman Jim Giusti said the Energy Department has accepted the recommendations and began implementing them when the audit was done.

"DOE-Savannah River issued letters in late July 2009 to the appropriate contractors informing and emphasizing their obligation to ensure compliance with all applicable employment laws and regulations, including employment verification for both prime contract and any subcontracts," Mr. Giusti said in an e-mailed response.

"The contractors were also notified of their obligation to verify citizenship by the completion of Form I-9."

## **AUDIT FINDINGS**

- Four subcontractors failed to utilize a federal I-9 Form to determine worker eligibility. Two of the four subcontractors stated that, as a result of the review, they have started using the I-9 Form.
- Twenty-two percent (136) of the 600 eligibility forms obtained during a sample of 21 subcontractors were missing key elements, including the subcontractor's affirmation that the identity documentation was reviewed and appeared authentic; and the employee's signature to affirm that employment information was correct.
- Sixteen subcontractor employees from a sampling of 60 might have had their Social Security numbers used by other people not associated with the Department of Energy, although the review found no evidence those 16 workers were using fraudulent numbers.

Source: US DOE Office of Inspector General

To view the complete report: [ig.energy.gov/documents/INS-O-10-01.pdf](http://ig.energy.gov/documents/INS-O-10-01.pdf)