



News from the Savannah River National Laboratory

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRNL's GEORGE WICKS TO RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AWARD

AIKEN, S.C. (March 3, 2010) – Dr. George Wicks, a highly respected scientist at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River National Laboratory, has been chosen to receive the 2010 South Carolina Governor's Award for Excellence in Scientific Research. The award, sponsored by the Governor's Office and the South Carolina Academy of Science, is presented each year to an individual or team whose achievements and contributions to science in South Carolina merit special recognition.

In a congratulatory letter to Dr. Wicks, Governor Mark Sanford said, "Your contributions ... have had a far reaching impact, not only on the state but also the nation and the world." In his 35-plus years at SRNL, he has been involved in many areas of materials science, physics and chemistry, making major contributions in programs such as the treatment of high level radioactive wastes, environmental remediation, sensor development, corrosion of materials, hydrogen storage systems, nuclear disarmament activities, chemical and biological agents, and a variety of new medical initiatives.

Garry Flowers, president of SRNL operating contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC, said "Dr. Wicks' combination of creativity and scientific knowledge has helped address some of the nation's most important issues, from radioactive waste management to energy to medicine. We are proud to have him as a part of SRNL, and proud that he is receiving this well-deserved recognition."

Internationally, Dr. Wicks is probably best known for his achievements in the use of glass, especially his contributions to the processes and methods for converting highly radioactive waste to a stable glass form, suitable for long-term storage and permanent disposal, a process known as vitrification. Much of his vitrification work has gone into making the Savannah River Site's Defense Waste Processing Facility a reality – the DWPF has now been successfully operating for more than 12 years to safely and effectively immobilize the Site's inventory of liquid waste – but he also designed and co-organized the largest international field testing program in the world on simulated high-level waste glasses and has been asked to serve on numerous advisory panels and committees both in the U.S. and in other countries, on many different aspects of the high-level waste vitrification program and associated efforts.

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In recent years, Dr. Wicks has led a team of interdisciplinary scientists in developing and patenting a new product called Porous Wall Hollow Glass Microspheres, tiny “microballoons” about 1/3 the diameter of a human hair, with unique capabilities for potential use in targeted drug delivery, hydrogen storage and other uses.

Among his other achievements are his co-development of a new class of composite materials that can be fabricated into special sensors, and co-development of a new hybrid microwave technology with the ability to remediate hazardous components and reclaim reusable metals. He is also the technical lead working with the medical community on a new series of initiatives involving technologies developed within the nuclear field, which are now being tailored and evaluated for potential applications in diagnostics, repair/ replacement, and therapy/ treatment of a variety of medical conditions. His work has resulted in 14 patents to date (with more in progress), and more than 200 external publications, including authoring or co-authoring four books and eight invited chapters in textbooks and encyclopedias.

Dr. Wicks serves on a National Inter-society Materials Board to help define material needs in the U.S. in alternative and renewable energy, which will produce a report that goes to Congress. In 2010, he will become the president-elect of the American Ceramic Society and is scheduled to serve as president of the 8,000-plus-member organization in 2011-2012.

Dr. Wicks will be recognized, along with the winners of the Governor's Award for Excellence in Scientific Awareness and the Governor's Young Scientist Award, at a special ceremony in April in conjunction with the South Carolina Academy of Science's annual meeting.

The award was established in 1985 by the Drug Science Foundation to honor specifically an individual or team within the state whose achievements and contributions to science in South Carolina merit special recognition and to promote wider awareness of the quality and extent of scientific activity in South Carolina. In 1989, the award was named the “Governor's Award for Excellence in Science” and is presented under the joint sponsorship of the Governor's Office and the South Carolina Academy of Science. These groups were later joined by the Dewees Development Corporation, Harbor Watch of Charleston, Roche Carolina Inc., MeadWestvaco, and Michelin North America.

SRNL is DOE's applied research and development national laboratory at SRS. SRNL puts science to work to support DOE and the nation in the areas of environmental management, national and homeland security, and energy security. The management and operating contractor for SRS and SRNL is Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC.