

For Immediate Release

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New labor agreement increases pay for UCOR construction trade workers

Oak Ridge, Tennessee, March 20, 2024 — Today, United Cleanup Oak Ridge (UCOR) took a major step forward in the company’s ability to recruit and retain skilled construction trade workers. The company signed a national Project Labor Agreement (PLA) with North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU), which increases UCOR’s ability to offer a competitive compensation package.

The PLA impacts some 550 trade workers, roughly a quarter of UCOR’s workforce. A significant benefit for UCOR will be stabilizing the company’s building trades workforce. The Construction Labor Agreement that was in place with local building trades limited UCOR’s ability to adjust wages to be competitive in today’s labor market. This disparity resulted in an attrition rate of more than 20 percent for UCOR craft workers.

“Without the support of our labor workforce, we would not have successfully completed the first-ever cleanup of a gaseous diffusion plant ahead of schedule and under budget,” said UCOR President and CEO Ken Rueter. “We rely on the talent and commitment to excellence that is constantly exhibited by these workers to ensure we are safely and efficiently meeting our commitments to DOE as we undertake Oak Ridge Reservation cleanup activities.”

This highly skilled and experienced workforce is key to UCOR’s success at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where two reactors have already been successfully demolished, and at the Y-12 National Security Complex where contaminated, former uranium processing facilities are being prepared for demolition.

The PLA offers a 20 percent wage increase over a three-year period, including a 12% increase in the first year that will be retroactive to October 1, 2023. It gives craft workers nine paid holidays, a new benefit. It also provides a contract ratification bonus and a retention incentive program.

“Our partnership with UCOR is stronger than ever. The signing of this decade-long project labor agreement (PLA) ensures that in the years to come, our 550 members whom it impacts will not only see the benefit of middle-class sustaining union wages but will be a critical part of our national environmental management clean-up efforts,” said Sean McGarvey, NABTU President. “Today’s

signing celebrates workers, environmental management, and economic opportunity for the hardworking Oak Ridge community.”

This is the first-ever agreement with a national-level labor organization in the DOE-Environmental Management (EM) cleanup. It allows for flexibility in wage increases and other incentives while establishing a template for other EM sites to use.

“We’re very pleased about the development and signing of this new project labor agreement between our contractor UCOR and NABTU,” said Jay Mullis, Manager of the DOE Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management (OREM). “The primary driver behind OREM’s sustained success has been the men and women in the field performing the work. This agreement will help UCOR retain this outstanding workforce, and it provides the means to ensure workers receive the pay and benefits that match their performance.”

UCOR is the DOE Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management’s lead environmental cleanup contractor. The company’s 2,200+ workers are dedicated to safely reducing environmental risk on the Oak Ridge Reservation while helping DOE’s Office of Science and the National Nuclear Security Administration continue their important missions. Learn more about the company at UCOR.com.

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Photos: PLA_signing1.jpg; PLA_signing2.jpg

Caption PLA_signing1.jpg: left to right, Jay Mullis, DOE Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management; Sean McGarvey, North America’s Building Trades Unions; Ken Rueter, UCOR at signing of the Project Labor Agreement

Caption PLA_signing2.jpg: NABTU’s Sean McGarvey and UCOR’s Ken Rueter celebrate the Project Labor Agreement