

Energy department rectifying 'past sins'

WASHINGTON — Seeking to "rectify past sins" in the operation of weapons reactors, Energy Department officials on Tuesday announced new safety procedures that they said would delay the reopening of the Savannah River Plant but would not jeopardize the nation's nuclear deterrent.

"We are about to embark on a program to restart, to move back to a safe operating level, those reactors ... at the end of the year," Energy Secretary John S. Herrington told a news conference called to discuss problems with the three reactors at Savannah River.

Department officials had planned to restart one of the reactors as early as November, but now plan to begin a four-week "phased restart" that will begin in December, said Herrington's deputy, Joseph F. Salgado.

Salgado sought to calm fears about possible shortages of the nuclear weapons material produced at Savannah River, especially of tritium, which decays more quickly than plu-

onium, the other fuel produced there. "We are comfortable that Savannah River will operate at a sufficient level to meet the tritium needs of the future," Salgado told reporters.

The news conference was called to defuse criticism of the Energy Department not only over the Savannah River Plant, located in Aiken, S.C., but also over radioactive contamination at another facility in Rocky Flats, Colo., and over allegedly lax security at weapons laboratories in New Mexico and California.

In related developments Tuesday: President Reagan voiced concern about the safety problem during a meeting with top officials of the departments of Defense and Energy, chief of staff Kenneth Duberstein said.

Duberstein, in an interview with the wire services, quoted Reagan as telling the administration officials that "we are most concerned and most committed to making sure that all safety precautions are taken and that all rules and regulations be fol-

lowed." The chairman of E.I. du Pont Nemours and Co., which operates Savannah River under contract for the Energy Department, reacted angrily to charges that company employees had a lax attitude about nuclear safety.

Officials said the shutdown of the Rocky Flats' main plutonium processing plant on Saturday virtually halted production at the nuclear weapons plant.

Congressional researchers said the Energy Department has admitted hundreds of visitors from communist and nuclear-sensitive nations into its nuclear weapons labs at Sandia, Los Alamos and Livermore without required security checks.

Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, said the cost of cleaning up radioactive and hazardous waste at Energy Department nuclear facilities is estimated at \$150 billion to \$175 billion. He cited estimates by Energy Department officials and the General Accounting Office.

Candidates spar, race tightens

Michael Dukakis and George Bush sparred at a distance Tuesday over trade issues in a prelude to this week's prime-time debate. The Democrat vowed to stand up for American companies and jobs, while the vice president charged that his rival was guilty of "protectionist demagoguery."

"My opponent needs an issue and he's willing to scare people to find it," Bush said of Dukakis' recent emphasis on a need to regain American dominance in world economic competition.

Dukakis counterpunched a few hours later as he left Boston for the West Coast. "I'm for more trade, not less trade. I want to export American products, not American jobs," he said.

Dukakis also took a fresh swipe at the Republican vice presidential candidate as new polls indicated Bush's ticketmate is draining support from the GOP. Said Dukakis:

"Dan Quayle wants to believe that if he ever had to fill in for George Bush, America could get by on a right wing and a prayer."

Bush defended his pick for vice president, saying Quayle had helped draft legislation that created jobs for the poor.

The two combatants in the race for the White House exchanged barbs as fresh polls charted a dwindling lead for Bush with four campaign weeks remaining. The surveys showed Dukakis and running mate Lloyd Benisek gaining ground since last week's vice presidential debate.

Democratic party officials announced that two senior strategists had been pulled out of Florida in what seemed to be a concession that Bush's double-digit lead there could not be overcome. The two were headed for Ohio, a swing state where Dukakis is viewed as trailing more narrowly.

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Lancaster County residents, however, cannot use the below form but may register to vote in the **Election Office, 555 South 9th Street**, until 6:00 p.m., October 28, 1988.

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