Westinghouse

LEU+ Fuel Expansion FAQs

What is LEU+ Fuel?

Westinghouse's Low Enriched Uranium Plus (LEU+) Fuel is nuclear fuel development that enables Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR) power plants to extend the operating time between fuel reloads from 18 to 24 months, increasing reactor availability by reducing down-time.

What is Enrichment in Nuclear Fuel?

Natural uranium contains two different isotopes. In 1,000 atoms of natural uranium, seven atoms are Uranium-235 and 993 atoms are Uranium-238. Only Uranium-235 is useful for energy production, and so the uranium is "enriched" to increase the ratio of Uranium-235 atoms. This is done by physically removing some of the Uranium 238 atoms. Enrichment at 5% means 50 uranium-235 atoms for every 950 uranium-238 atoms, while 8% means 80 uranium-235 atoms for every 920 Uranium-238 atoms. The more Uranium-235 that there is, the higher the energy level of the fuel and the more energy available for the power plant to use. This is similar to a battery with a higher level of charge.

Why does Westinghouse need to expand operations to create LEU+ Fuel?

LEU+ requires fuel with higher uranium enrichment (above 5%) that cannot be manufactured at the existing CFFF facility because of the plant configuration and current process technology. The new production facility is purposely designed to produce nuclear fuel with a higher enrichment level using more advanced technology in a new building adjacent to the existing plant.

How does manufacturing LEU+ Fuel differ from your current operation?

The newly built facility will feature modern standards with higher levels of automation and advanced technologies, worker ergonomics and production quality, while maintaining high levels of safety. The new facility also will use an innovative "dry" process, similar to the process currently used at the Westinghouse facility in the United Kingdom. While we have continuously improved the existing fuel manufacturing process over the years, the new fuel manufacturing facility will further advance these efforts through a streamlined process that reduces chemical use and lowers the potential for environmental impacts.

How will this create a positive economic impact across South Carolina?

A recent independent economic impact study by the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business found that the expanded fuel facility in Richland County will have a positive economic impact of $4.9 billion for the Community and state over the next decade. Additionally, the study determined that the average salary at the Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility is 64% higher than the average wage in South Carolina. These are positive impacts creating opportunities for workforce development and advancement.

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How will the new facility benefit the community?

We believe there is an immediate benefit to the local community from an investment at this scale, including opportunities for small and large businesses to participate in the project as contractors, sub-contractors or suppliers, as well as individual participation through local hiring by major contractors. At its peak this project is expected to host several hundred contractors in addition to our in-house team of approximately 30-50 people, creating potential benefit to local businesses.

Adding a LEU+ Fuel production facility will create new jobs and career advancement opportunities for current and future employees. Some of the newer, more advanced technologies will require advanced technical skills, and we are partnering with local technical schools, colleges and universities to nurture these skills.

What is the current state of the new plant project at the CFFF site?

The site has been cleared, graded and prepared for construction, with subsurface investigations and foundation planning completed to reduce project risk and support a successful build.

How much financial support and tax relief (“incentives”) did you receive from Richland County and the State?

Richland County supported this historic expansion with economic development incentives that are customary for major industrial expansions of this type. There are various incentives and grants available to support local investment, training and hiring. Westinghouse has also agreed to a long-term fixed fee-in-lieu of tax on the total value of capital investments at the Columbia Fuel Fabrication Facility, which is typical for transformative economic development projects in South Carolina.



Rendering of new LEU+ Facility in Hopkins, SC. © 2026 Westinghouse Electric Company. All rights reserved.