



"Investing in NNSA is an Investment in the Tennessee Valley," Keynote Address to the 2011 TVC National Technology Summit by Administrator Thomas P. D'Agostino

Speech

May 16, 2011

As prepared for delivery.

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to join you today. As many of you know, this is the second consecutive year I have participated in this summit. While I was happy to join you in Washington last year, I am even happier to be here in Chattanooga today.

Let me begin by thanking Ted Sherry for the excellent job he has done as our Site Office Manager at the Y-12 National Security Complex. As you well know, Y-12 is one of the most important national security facilities in the country. We have terrific leadership teams at all of our sites, but Y-12 – and indeed the whole Oak Ridge community – is fortunate to have one of our very best. Ted, thank you for your service to our country and the community.

I would also like to take a moment to thank Congressman Chuck Fleischmann, Congressman Mo Brooks, and Congressman Scott DesJarlais – not just for your hospitality, but for your support of the National Nuclear Security Administration. The 35,000 men and women across our enterprise are working to keep our country safe, protect our allies, and enhance global security. We could not do this work without strong, bipartisan support and engaged leadership from the Congress. When I look at the three of you, I know we have that support.

Let's also take a minute to thank the founder of this organization, Congressman Zach Wamp. Just as our sites cannot thrive without supportive communities, the residents of East Tennessee have benefited from truly excellent representation in Congress. Congressman Wamp's leadership in forming the Tennessee Valley Corridor is an example of that.

Finally, I would be remiss if I failed to thank Senator Corker and Senator Alexander for their leadership and support. For most of last year, I had the honor of working with them to help secure critical investments in the future of our nuclear security enterprise by supporting the transformation of key facilities, including the Uranium Processing Facility in Oak Ridge.

In addition to being one of the largest construction projects in the Southeastern United States, UPF will also reinforce the vital role that East Tennessee plays in keeping the American people safe and pushing the frontiers of science and discovery. I saw firsthand the commitment of these two great Senators to our nation's security, and the health and wellbeing of the people of Tennessee. I thank them both for their support.

When we met last year, I came before you at a time of transition and opportunity for our enterprise. NNSA had just celebrated our 10th anniversary as an independently organized part of the Department of Energy. The President had just issued a Nuclear Posture Review that adopted a 21st century approach to nuclear security and brought renewed emphasis to the full range of our nuclear security missions. We had just completed an historic Nuclear Security Summit that gathered 47 heads of state in Washington – the largest summit hosted in the United States since the end of World War II – to secure pledges from our partners around the world to lock down nuclear material and keep it out of the hands of terrorists.

As historic as those events were, in many respects, this past year has been even more significant.

We ratified the New START Treaty, reducing our nuclear stockpile to the lowest levels since the Eisenhower Administration.

Despite budget pressures felt throughout the federal government, the President and your Tennessee delegation demonstrated the emerging bipartisan consensus on the need to invest in our future by passing an historic increase in our program for fiscal year 2011.

That request was followed with a proposed budget for 2012 that seeks another significant increase in our program, highlighting the indispensable role NNSA plays in implementing the President's nuclear security agenda.

We have seen the unique and essential capabilities NNSA offers the nation – and indeed the world – on display in real time in response to the crisis at the Fukushima nuclear reactor complex.

As you know, the earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11 caused significant damage to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, releasing radioactive materials into the environment. First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Japan during this very difficult time.

Within hours of the earthquake, we were mobilizing to assist in the response. The Department deployed 45 people and more than 17,200 pounds of equipment to Japan, including NNSA's Aerial Measuring System and our Consequence Management Response Teams.

These teams are the tip of the spear, but people here at home – including right here in Tennessee – have been working hard to respond to the most significant nuclear crisis in a generation. That includes our Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site – called REACTS – which provided medical advice about radiological exposure to our partners in Japan.

Everyone in the NNSA is proud of the important role we are playing in dealing with this tragedy. It shows the commitment to service and the excellence that exists across our enterprise. It shows what we are capable of when we act as One NNSA. And it highlights the importance of the investments President Obama has requested for NNSA and the Department.

Those same investments in our future are also an investment in the communities we call home. We know we cannot do this job without strong communities near our sites.

At NNSA, we are committed to doing our part to support the economic vitality of the Tennessee Valley. With roughly 8,000 people working at Y-12 on a given day, Y-12 is one of Tennessee's largest employers.

It has also become a major training center for security forces from around the nation and world. We expect Y-12 will draw well over 1,000 to Oak Ridge for training this year, bringing hotel and meal dollars with them.



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In April, Y-12 and the University of Tennessee signed a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at moving technologies from research laboratories into production facilities. The goal is to push more technologies into the private sector and expand collaborations in areas ranging from joint research to analysis of business operations.

The partnership combines the leading research talents of the university with Y-12's successful track record in technology development and application. It will help UT in its pursuit to become one of the nation's top 25 public research institutions, while helping NNSA recruit and retain the next generation of nuclear security experts. At the same time, it will help promote economic competitiveness throughout the Tennessee Valley region.

We are also investing in the development of innovative technologies that help advance our mission, while bringing new products to market and making the Tennessee Valley Corridor a technological center of excellence.

Take, for example, a new cleaning solvent called RonJohn. A blend of two chemicals, RonJohn can safely and cleanly remove any type of coating on almost any surface—including metal, ceramics, glass, wood and textiles. It doesn't evaporate as quickly as competing products, allowing more time for it to do its job and minimizing the need for multiple applications. It has the potential to revolutionize the paint-stripping and adhesive-removal industries. It was born at Y-12 and licensed to a startup company in South Carolina that has already started production and takes orders online.

Or, as another example, consider the microwave metal and ceramic processing technology developed at Y-12. We started looking at this more than 30 years ago as a quicker, more efficient and less expensive way to fix cracks in ceramics. Pretty soon, we will be using it to melt metals, which is a vital part of the Y 12 production process.

The new microwave units they developed can reduce heating costs for melting metal by 30 percent while reducing processing time, improving metal purity and significantly reducing floor space requirements. This could revolutionize metal melting not only at Y 12, but also in the private sector.

For U.S. industry, using microwaves to heat metals could save billions of dollars in energy costs. The casting industry spends about \$11 billion per year on heating costs for melting metals. Microwave casting could cut that cost by more than \$3 billion.

In the field of microwave research alone, Y 12 has more than 50 patents, patents pending and invention disclosures. Through licensing, Y 12's advances in microwave technology benefit industry and, ultimately, the national economy.

This is a great example of how we are partnering with private industry in mutually beneficial ways. To put the technology into production, Y 12 worked with Microwave Synergy Inc. and MS Technology Inc., two technology companies that were part of Y 12's mentor-protégé program.

The mentor-protégé agreements allow protégé companies to benefit from the expertise that is housed at Y 12, and Y 12 benefits from the production capabilities of these industrial partners.

We license the technology to private industry, they develop a commercial product, and we purchase the production unit for use at Y 12. Private industry can do this faster and cheaper than we can. Local private sector jobs get created, and we all win.

All of this adds up to one undeniable reality: investing in our future and building the enterprise needed to implement the President's nuclear security agenda means investing in East Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley. Thanks in large part to your support, we are seeing a broad, bipartisan national commitment on the need to make those investments.

But we must also recognize that Congress and the American people have many competing demands for limited resources, and that our request for additional investments comes at a time of acute financial stress for our entire country. While I believe nothing is more important than ensuring our nation's security, it is my responsibility to ensure that we can manage these increased resources wisely. Our ability to maintain consensus for completing critical projects like UPF absolutely depends on it.

That is why we are absolutely committed to improving the way we do business.

For us, improving our project management is a part of achieving our mission. To better ensure we bring major projects like UPF to completion on time and on budget, we must ensure that we have qualified project managers leading our major projects. We will set cost and schedule baselines on construction projects when design work is 90 percent complete, and we will subject those estimates to rigorous independent reviews.

We are partnering with our M&O partners to streamline our governance model to devote more resources to mission work while maximizing safety and security at sites.

We are making sure we have the right contracting strategy in place.

We are continuing to find innovative ways to save money across the enterprise. For example, since 2007, our Supply Chain Management Center has used new technologies and pooled purchasing power to drive efficiencies across our sites. The result has been more than \$213 million in auditable cost savings.

All of this is part of our effort to create "One NNSA," a true partnership between all of our programs and all of our partners to fulfill our common mission.

Taken together, these steps will ensure we have a modern, 21st century nuclear security enterprise that is safer, more secure, more efficient, and organized to succeed.

Many of the steps we are taking to make that vision a reality dovetail nicely with the priorities being pursued by the Tennessee Valley Corridor. Just like you are working to make the Tennessee Valley a hub for technology innovation, we are working to do the same at our sites.

For example, we are looking for innovative, enterprise-wide solutions on information technology. We know that Y-12 has often been viewed as a rigid, closed nuclear production site, with security requirements that limit technology deployment. What many people may not know, however, is that we are using expertise and ideas generated at Y-12 to drive towards an enterprise-wide wireless initiative. This is an example of how we are using the expertise and technological capabilities developed at our site to deploy modern tools for improving productivity. We are doing it in a secure way, and saving the taxpayers money in the process.

Of course, that's exciting for NNSA, but it also has the potential to promote far broader benefits for our entire nation. The same teams working on our wireless initiative are also beginning to talk to ONRL about collaborating to make Oak Ridge a model for how wireless technology can be leveraged for other applications.

We are early in the process, but this is an example of the way that investing in NNSA's future is an investment in this region and an investment in our nation's economic competitiveness.

I thank you for your support, and look forward to continuing to work with you to continue and expand that work.

Thank you very much.



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