

Paris, 11 June 2008

NEA/COM(2008)3

NEA NUCLEAR SAFETY PROJECT CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF OPERATION

The OECD/NEA Halden Reactor Project is celebrating 50 years of continuous operation today with a ceremony in Oslo, Norway. Under the auspices of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), the research being done in the project helps improve the safety of nuclear power plants. It is the Agency's longest-running and largest joint project with an annual budget of EUR 15 million.

The unique capabilities of the Halden test reactor have been a major factor in the success of the project. The Halden reactor's unique core design, combined with advanced reactor test rigs, allows many experiments to be conducted simultaneously. These experiments have produced a lot of the nuclear fuel data used today by nuclear regulators, the nuclear industry and research institutions around the world. The project has also been the scene of much ground-breaking work in the field of human-machine interaction. Methods developed to reduce potential human error during nuclear power plant operation and maintenance have been adopted by other industries.

The NEA has applied the experience gained within the project to other nuclear safety research projects in such areas as fuel safety, thermal-hydraulics and severe accidents. The "Halden model" has proved to be a successful format, enabling countries with a common technical interest to carry out research on a highly effective, cost-sharing basis. Ongoing NEA research on the computerised systems of nuclear power plants and the ageing of reactor internals and cables first began in Halden.

The founding agreement of the Halden Reactor Project was signed by seven countries in 1958 and has been revised and renewed every three years since. There are currently 130 organisations from 17 countries participating in the project. In addition to providing financial support, some organisations regularly second research scientists to the project, which is based in the facilities of the Norwegian Institute for Energy Technology in Halden, Norway.

Further details regarding the project are available at: www.nea.fr/html/jointproj/halden.html.

.../...

.../...

News media contacts:

Karen Daifuku
Head, External Relations and Public Affairs
OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA)
Tel.: +33 (0)1 45 24 10 10
Fax: +33 (0)1 45 24 11 10
E-mail: daifuku@nea.fr
Website: www.nea.fr

NEA membership consists of 28 OECD countries. The mission of the NEA is to assist its member countries in maintaining and further developing, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal bases required for a safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The NEA also provides authoritative assessments and forges common understandings on key issues, as input to government decisions on nuclear energy policy and to broader OECD policy analyses in areas such as energy and sustainable development. The information, data and analyses it provides draw on one of the best international networks of technical experts.