



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
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**Public invited to comment on Draft Environmental Assessment for the Resumption of Transient Testing of Nuclear Fuels and Materials**

***NOTICE: DOE has extended the public comment period on its Draft Environmental Assessment for the Resumption of Transient Testing of Nuclear Fuels and Materials to January 10, 2014.***

The U.S. Department of Energy invites the public to read and comment on a draft environmental assessment it has prepared for a proposal to resume transient testing of nuclear fuels and materials at either Idaho National Laboratory (INL) or Sandia National Laboratories (SNL).

Transient testing involves placing fuel or material into the core of a nuclear reactor and subjecting it to short bursts of intense, high-power radiation in order to analyze the effects of the radiation. The resulting information is used to guide the development and improvement of advanced nuclear fuel designs, and to validate computer models of fuel and core behavior required for U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission evaluation of nuclear power reactor design and safety evaluations.

“Safe, secure transient testing of nuclear fuels and materials would help America improve current nuclear power plant performance and sustainability, and offer critical design input into America’s next generation of reactors,” Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Pete Lyons said. “Transient testing would also help America’s scientists and engineers better understand how nuclear fuels and materials hold up in severe accident scenarios and enable the design of fuels with greater tolerance to these severe accidents.”

The draft environmental assessment prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act is posted for public review at either of the following links:

- [http://www.id.energy.gov/insideNEID/PDF/Draft%20RTT%20EA%2011-12-2013%20\(Draft%20V1\).pdf](http://www.id.energy.gov/insideNEID/PDF/Draft%20RTT%20EA%2011-12-2013%20(Draft%20V1).pdf)
- <http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2013/11/f4/EA-1954-DEA-2013.pdf>

The federal action proposed in this document is to resume transient testing at INL’s Transient Reactor Test Facility reactor approximately 38 miles west of Idaho Falls, Idaho or to start transient testing at SNL’s Annular Core Research Reactor in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The draft environmental assessment identifies INL as the preferred location and describes DOE’s reasons for identifying INL as the preferred location.

The INL Transient Reactor Test Facility began operating on February 23, 1959 and was a principal reactor safety testing facility in the U.S. for 35 years, performing transient tests on thermal and fast reactor fuels. Since 1994, the reactor has been maintained in a standby status. Activities under the preferred alternative would include refurbishment or like-for-like replacement of systems and equipment that prepare the reactor and its support buildings for operations.

Post-irradiation examination activities would be conducted at onsite INL facilities. Transportation of fuel and test assemblies would occur on the INL site using site roads.

The 49-day public comment period on the draft environmental assessment will conclude on January 3, 2014. Comments can be submitted by mail to Chuck Ljungberg, 1955 Fremont Ave., mailstop 1216, Idaho Falls, Idaho, 83415 or by e-mail to [rttea@id.doe.gov](mailto:rttea@id.doe.gov). Paper copies of the document are available on request. Additional information on the resumption of transient testing can be found at <http://energy.gov/ne/articles/resumption-transient-testing>.