

U.S. DoE designates reactor as user facility

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The U.S. Department of Energy has designated its Idaho National Laboratory's Advanced Test Reactor as a National Scientific User Facility.

Officials said the designation will help assert U.S. leadership in nuclear science and technology and will attract new users -- universities, laboratories and industry -- to conduct research at the reactor.

"Clean, safe nuclear energy must be a key component of our nation's energy mix as our economy and demand for clean energy continues to grow," said Assistant Secretary of Nuclear Energy Dennis Spurgeon. "By encouraging research and development at (the department's) Idaho facility, we are advancing our nation's scientific know-how necessary to spur construction of the next generation of nuclear plants."

The Advanced Test Reactor was built to improve nuclear reactor performance and to investigate problems with commercial reactors. Now, as a National Scientific User Facility, officials said the ATR offers unique domestic capabilities for nuclear fuel and reactor materials system development that industry, universities, and regulatory agencies will be able to utilize.

The ATR is the only U.S. materials test reactor that can replicate multiple different reactor environments concurrently.

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