

INL News Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Aug. 1, 2011

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**New nuclear technician program to open in fall**

POCATELLO — Finding a job in today's tight employment market isn't easy — unless you are a nuclear reactor operator. Industry growth and a wave of retirements are creating a shortage of people who maintain and operate nuclear reactors.

That's why Idaho National Laboratory has helped start a nuclear operations technician program at Idaho State University's Energy Systems Technology and Education Center (ESTEC). The two-year program opens this fall and will train reactor operators for jobs available at INL and in the nuclear industry.

"INL will be facing the same workforce shortages as everyone else in the nuclear energy industry," said Richard Holman, manager of INL's Energy Workforce Initiatives. "We need to train and educate the next generation of nuclear technicians if INL is to retain its leading role in nuclear energy research. This program allows us to grow our own highly skilled workforce. Idahoans like to stay in Idaho and that is good for the lab and the state."

Experts from INL's Nuclear Operations organization will be teaching some of the courses. So far, eight of the 16 student slots have been filled for the fall.

Recruiting workers is a major focus of the nuclear energy industry. A recent Nuclear Energy Institute report estimates about half the nuclear industry's workforce — many of whom are reactor operators — will be eligible to retire during the next 10 years.

"As a lab, we've been identifying short- and long-term solutions to this problem," Holman said. "That's why we approached ISU over a year ago about creating this new program at ESTEC."

INL teamed with ISU and Partners for Prosperity, a nonprofit organization, in 2007 to create ESTEC on ISU's Pocatello campus.

ESTEC has steadily added new programs based on input from the energy industry. With the addition of the nuclear operations technology program, ESTEC will offer seven different energy-related degrees and certificates.

"We are constantly working with industry to assess their needs," said Scott Rasmussen, ESTEC director. "We want our students to be productive from their very first day on the job. We do this through our unique instructional program of hands-on laboratory activities that provide students with the real world experience they need to be successful and technically competent."

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of the strategic goal areas of DOE: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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—NL-11-022—

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