

Netherlands restarts producing much-need isotopes a day early

Written by Editorial Staff - Tuesday, August 18 2009

The Nuclear Research & Consultancy Group returned the High Flux Reactor into operation on Monday, following its annual month-long maintenance stop. With this, the production of medical isotopes and the nuclear research activities are resumed one day ahead of schedule.

As in previous years, the inspection of the cooling water pipe work was part of the program. Repeated inspections allow the analysis of a number of points of known corrosion and localized deformation in the pipe work and also the point, where in 2008, a small bubble stream was observed, NRG said.

In connection with the planned repair of the cooling water pipe work scheduled in early 2010, the pipe work was also inspected in a number of other locations. The group said that the “overall picture is that the condition of the corrosion in the pipe work is unchanged.”

This longer scheduled stop in production to repair the pipe work is particularly daunting to the nuclear medicine community, as its sister nuclear reactor, the National Research Universal in Chalk River, Ontario, announced it will not reopen until early 2010. When both of the world’s largest isotope producers are shuttered, the nuclear medicine community will be left wanting for a supply of molybdenum-99, which is used in approximately 13 million patient procedures annually.

NRG said that the relevant authorities supervised the whole inspection program and were present during all of the inspection activities.