Atoms for Peace

A half century ago, President Dwight Eisenhower challenged world leaders to join him in adapting the atom to the "arts of peace."

Harnessing Peaceful Nuclear Technology

The Atoms for Peace Initiative

Fifty years ago, President Dwight Eisenhower laid out a vision transforming the atom from a threat to a benefit for all mankind. Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech to the United Nations General Assembly on December 8, 1953, proposed creating a system of international cooperation to develop peaceful nuclear technologies and share them with countries around the world. The proposal changed thinking about nuclear energy from a means of destruction to a path for improving quality of life for people everywhere.

The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory is a science-based, applied engineering national laboratory dedicated to supporting the U.S. Department of Energy's missions in energy security, national security, environment and science.

Implementing the "Hopeful Alternative"

Eisenhower's speech led to concrete steps to create and promote peaceful nuclear technologies as the "hopeful alternative" to atomic warfare.

- The International Atomic Energy Agency was created to promote international cooperation on nuclear issues.
- The Atomic Energy Act was revised to allow private industry develop

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civilian nuclear power reactors.

- EURATOM was created to develop peaceful nuclear power in Europe.
- The United States promoted the diffusion of nuclear science and technology through agreements with dozens of countries, training programs for scientists and engineers, the donation of technical libraries and other initiatives.

By the mid-1960s, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission was devoting more than half of its budget to the "peaceful atom."

Peaceful Nuclear Technology in Practice

In the decades since Eisenhower launched the Atoms for Peace initiative, nuclear technology has become part of everyday life, improving lives in numerous ways:

- Energy. A usable amount of electricity was first generated by nuclear energy at the National Reactor Testing Station (now the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory) in 1951. In 1955, Arco, Idaho became the first U.S. town powered by nuclear energy – also from a nuclear reactor at the National Reactor Testing Station. In the decades since then, nuclear energy has proven itself to be a clean, efficient alternative to burning fossil fuels. Today, nuclear power generates 16 percent of the world's, and 20 percent of the United States' electricity without emitting harmful greenhouse gases. An international research effort, spearheaded in the U.S. by the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, is creating a new generation of nuclear technologies that will help make an even bigger contribution to meeting the world's energy needs.
- Medicine. Nuclear technology is vital for modern medical diagnostics and cancer treatments.
- Strengthening the economy. Nuclear technology has dozens of industrial and agricultural applications that help make products better and the economy stronger.
- Exploring the past. Radioisotopes have helped determine the ages of everything from the Dead Sea Scrolls to ancient fossils.
- Exploring space. Nuclear energy has taken spacecraft to the outer reaches of the solar system and beyond.

The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and other facilities around the nation and around the world continue to research and develop new ways to apply nuclear technology to making people's lives better.