



Standard Practice for Conducting Irradiations at Accelerator-Based Neutron Sources¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E798; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers procedures for irradiations at accelerator-based neutron sources. The discussion focuses on two types of sources, namely nearly monoenergetic 14-MeV neutrons from the deuterium-tritium T(d,n) interaction, and broad spectrum neutrons from stopping deuterium beams in thick beryllium or lithium targets. However, most of the recommendations also apply to other types of accelerator-based sources, including spallation neutron sources (1).² Interest in spallation sources has increased recently due to their development of high-power, high-flux sources for neutron scattering and their proposed use for transmutation of fission reactor waste (2).

1.2 Many of the experiments conducted using such neutron sources are intended to provide a simulation of irradiation in another neutron spectrum, for example, that from a DT fusion reaction. The word simulation is used here in a broad sense to imply an approximation of the relevant neutron irradiation environment. The degree of conformity can range from poor to nearly exact. In general, the intent of these experiments is to establish the fundamental relationships between irradiation or material parameters and the material response. The extrapolation of data from such experiments requires that the differences in neutron spectra be considered.

1.3 The procedures to be considered include methods for characterizing the accelerator beam and target, the irradiated sample, and the neutron flux (fluence rate) and spectrum, as well as procedures for recording and reporting irradiation data.

1.4 Other experimental problems, such as temperature control, are not included.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E10 on Nuclear Technology and Applications and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E10.08 on Procedures for Neutron Radiation Damage Simulation.

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² The boldface numbers in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of this practice.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*³

C859 Terminology Relating to Nuclear Materials

E170 Terminology Relating to Radiation Measurements and Dosimetry

E181 Test Methods for Detector Calibration and Analysis of Radionuclides

E261 Practice for Determining Neutron Fluence, Fluence Rate, and Spectra by Radioactivation Techniques

E263 Test Method for Measuring Fast-Neutron Reaction Rates by Radioactivation of Iron

E264 Test Method for Measuring Fast-Neutron Reaction Rates by Radioactivation of Nickel

E265 Test Method for Measuring Reaction Rates and Fast-Neutron Fluences by Radioactivation of Sulfur-32

E266 Test Method for Measuring Fast-Neutron Reaction Rates by Radioactivation of Aluminum

E393 Test Method for Measuring Reaction Rates by Analysis of Barium-140 From Fission Dosimeters

E854 Test Method for Application and Analysis of Solid State Track Recorder (SSTR) Monitors for Reactor Surveillance, E706(IIIB)

E910 Test Method for Application and Analysis of Helium Accumulation Fluence Monitors for Reactor Vessel Surveillance, E706 (IIIC)

3. Terminology

3.1 Descriptions of relevant terms are found in Terminology **C859** and Terminology **E170**.

4. Summary of Existing and Proposed Facilities

4.1 *T(d,n) Sources:*

³ For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

4.1.1 Neutrons are produced by the highly exoergic reaction $d + t \rightarrow n + \alpha$. The total nuclear energy released is 17.589 MeV, resulting in about a 14.8-MeV neutron and a 2.8-MeV alpha particle at low deuterium beam energies (3). The deuteron energy (generally 150 to 400 keV) is chosen to maximize the neutron yield (for a particular target configuration) from the resonance in the d-t cross section near 100 keV. The number of neutrons emitted as a function of angle (θ) between the neutron direction and the incident deuteron beam is very nearly isotropic in the center-of-mass system. At a deuteron energy of 400 keV in the laboratory system, the neutron flux in the forward direction is about 14 % greater than in the backward direction, while the corresponding neutron energy decreases from 15.6 to 13.8 MeV (4). In practice, the neutron field also depends on the gradual loss of the target material and the tritium deposition profile. Detailed calculations should then be made for a specific facility.

4.1.2 The flux seen at a point (r, θ, z) in cylindrical coordinates from a uniform T(d,n) source of diameter a is given by the following (5):

$$\phi(r, \theta, z) = \frac{Y}{4\pi a^2} \ln \left\{ \frac{(k^4 + 4r^2 z^2)^{1/2} + k^2}{2z^2} \right\} \quad (1)$$

where:

$$k^2 = a^2 + z^2 - r^2, \text{ and}$$

Y = the total source strength.

For $z \gg a$ and $r = 0$ (on beam axis) this reduces to $Y/4\pi z^2$, as expected for a point source. The available irradiation volume at maximum flux is usually small. For a sample placed close to the target, the flux will decrease very rapidly with increasing radial distance off the beam axis. However, since the neutron energy is nearly constant, this drop in flux is relatively easy to measure by foil activation techniques.

4.1.3 Other existing sources, such as Cockroft-Walton type accelerators, are similar in nature although the available neutron source strengths are much lower.

4.1.4 *Rotating Target Neutron Source (RTNS) I and II (5-7)*—RTNS I and II, which formerly were operated at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, provided 14 MeV neutron source strengths of about 6×10^{12} and 4×10^{13} neutrons/s, respectively. Although these facilities have been shut down, they were the most intense sources of 14 MeV neutrons built to date for research purposes. They are discussed here because of their relevance to any future neutron sources. Their characteristics are summarized in Table 1. A discussion of similar sources can be found in Ref (8). The deuteron beam

energy was 400 keV and the target was a copper-zirconium alloy (or copper with dispersed alumina) vapor-plated with tritium-occluded titanium. The beam spot size was about 10 mm in diameter. In addition to being rotated, the target also was rocked every few hours and the deuteron beam current was increased slowly in an attempt to maintain a constant flux in spite of tritium burn-up in the target. Samples could be placed as close as 2.5 to 4.0 mm from the region of maximum d-t interaction resulting in a typical flux of 10^{13} n/cm²·s over a small sample. The neutron fields were well characterized by a variety of methods and the absolute fluence could be routinely determined to ± 7 %. Calculated neutron flux contours for RTNS-II are shown in Fig. 1.

4.2 Be or Li(d,n) Sources (9):

4.2.1 When a high-energy (typically 30- to 40-MeV) deuteron beam is stopped in a beryllium (or lithium) target, a continuous spectrum of neutrons is produced extending from thermal energies to about 4 MeV (15 MeV for lithium) above the incident deuteron energy (see Figs. 2-4). In existing facilities, cyclotrons with deuteron beam intensities of 20 to 40 μ A provide neutron source strengths in the range of 10^{13} n/s, using solid beryllium targets with water cooling. A more intense source ($>10^{16}$ n/s) is now being designed employing liquid lithium targets. In the remainder of this document the term Be(d,n) source is meant as a generic term including Li(d,n) sources, whether solid or liquid targets.

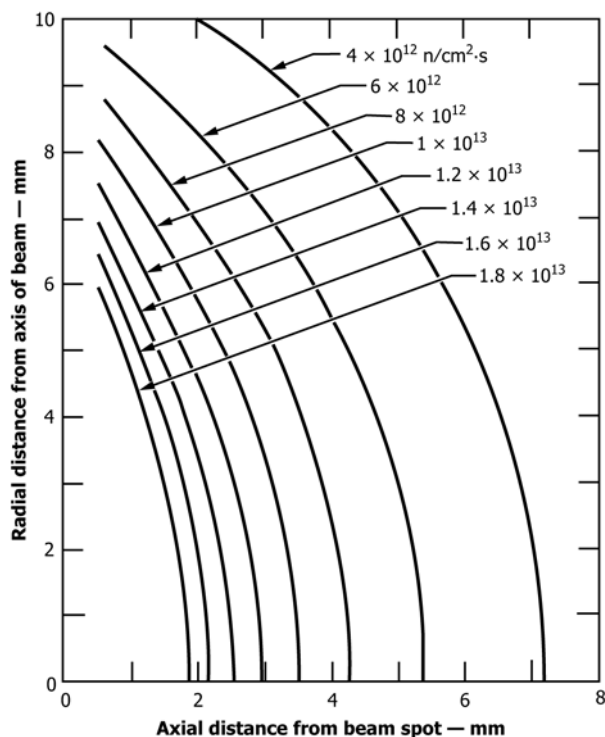
4.2.2 Neutrons are produced by several competing nuclear reaction mechanisms. The most important one for radiation damage studies is the direct, stripping reaction since it produces almost all of the high-energy neutrons. When the incident deuteron passes close to a target nucleus, the proton is captured and the neutron tends to continue on in a forward direction. The high energy neutrons are thus preferentially emitted in the direction of the incident deuteron beam. However, as the deuterons slow down in the target, lower energy neutrons will be produced with angular distributions that are much less forward peaked. Furthermore, when the residual nucleus is left in an excited state, the angular effects are also much less pronounced. These latter two effects tend to decrease the average neutron energy at angles other than 0° in the direction of the beam.

4.2.3 Neutrons can also be produced by compound nuclear reactions in which the entire deuteron is captured by the target nucleus and neutrons are subsequently evaporated. Neutrons are preferentially emitted with energies less than a few MeV

TABLE 1 Characteristics of T(d,n) and Be or Li(d,n) Neutron Sources

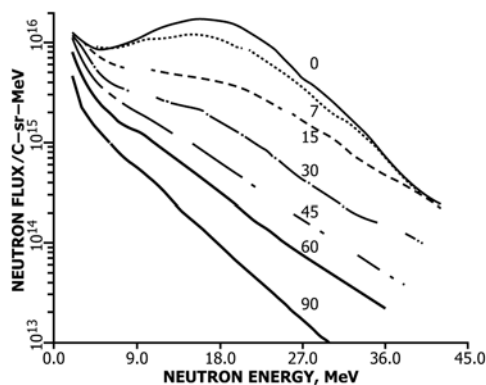
Facility	Availability	Beam	Target	Source Strength, n/s	Maximum Flux at Sample, n/cm ² ·s	Experimental Volume for Maximum Flux, cm ³
RTNS I	No longer available	400 keV d	t	6×10^{12}	$>10^{12}$	0.2
RTNS II	No longer available	400 keV d	t	4×10^{13}	$>10^{13}$	0.2
Existing Be or Li(d,n)	U.C. Davis Cyclotron ^A	30–40 MeV d	Solid Be or Li	$\sim 10^{13}$	$>10^{12}$	~ 1.0
Proposed Li(d,n)	Conceptual design (9)	30–40 MeV d	Liquid Li	3×10^{16}	$>10^{15}$	10.0
					$>10^{14}$	600.0

^A This is the only existing facility that has been well characterized and is readily available, although other facilities can be used.



NOTE 1—Flux contours assume a symmetric, Gaussian beam profile. Figure from Ref. (5).

FIG. 1 Flux Contours for RTNS II



NOTE 1—Neutron spectra as a function of energy and angle for ⁹Be(d,n) source at ORNL, E_d = 40 MeV. (Data from Ref (8).)

FIG. 2 Neutron Spectra as a Function of Energy and Angle from the Forward Direction of the Deuteron Beam

and the angular distribution approaches isotropy at neutron energies below 1 MeV. Neutrons also are produced by deuteron break-up, in which the deuteron simply breaks apart in the Coulomb field of the nucleus, although this effect is very small for low-Z materials.

4.2.4 The neutron spectrum thus depends very strongly on the angle from the incident deuteron direction, and the flux is very sharply peaked in the forward direction (see Fig. 2). Materials studies for which the maximum total neutron fluence is desired are usually conducted close to the target and may subtend a large range of forward angles (for example, 0 to 60°).

This practice primarily will be concerned with this close-geometry situation since it is the most difficult to handle properly.

4.2.5 Other factors can also influence the neutron field during a particular irradiation, especially beam and target characteristics, as well as the perturbing influence of surrounding materials. At present, these facilities have not been completely characterized for routine use. In particular, some uncertainties exist, especially at low (<2 MeV) and high (<30 MeV) neutron energies, since these regions are either difficult to measure with existing techniques, or the required nuclear data are insufficient. In these cases, neutron dosimetry data should be reported directly to allow reanalysis as procedures and nuclear data improve in the future.

4.2.6 Existing Sources:

4.2.6.1 Whereas virtually any deuteron accelerator with reasonable energy and intensity can be used as a neutron source, only two facilities have been used routinely for materials effects irradiations, namely the cyclotrons at the University of California at Davis (10) and at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (11, 12). Typical flux-spectra obtained are shown in Figs. 2-4 (9, 11, 13), and typical characteristics are listed in Table 1.

4.2.6.2 Since the neutron flux and spectral gradients are so steep, experimenters are faced with the problem of nonuniform irradiations over their samples unless specimen sizes are severely limited. Alternatively, the field gradients may be moderated by deliberately moving or enlarging the beam spot on the target. This technique will result in a lower total fluence as well as a lower average neutron energy for a small-size sample on the beam axis, although larger samples will not be so severely affected and may in fact show an overall improvement in average fluence and neutron energy.

4.2.6.3 At present, the neutron field can be determined reasonably well at existing facilities. The flux-spectrum can be measured to within ±10 to 30 % in the 2- to 30-MeV energy region where about 90 % of neutron damage is initiated (assuming E_d = 30 to 40 MeV). Highly accurate (±10 %) time-of-flight spectrometry has been used to study the field far from the source, except for the energy region below a few MeV (11). However, close geometry irradiations must rely on passive dosimetry with larger errors due to uncertainties in the nuclear cross sections, especially above 30 MeV (12).

4.2.7 Conceptual Design for Li(d,n) Source (9, 14)—A conceptual design for a fusion materials irradiation facility was done at the Hanford Engineering Development Laboratory (HEDL). The design consisted of a high-current (100-mA) deuteron accelerator and a liquid lithium target. This was expected to produce a neutron source strength of about 3 × 10¹⁶ n/s (14). The designs called for a wide-area beam spot on the target (for example, 3 by 1 cm), thereby moderating the steep neutron field gradients in close geometry. Neutron fluxes up to 10¹⁵ n/cm².s could be produced over a volume of several cubic centimetres, allowing much larger samples than with present sources. This facility would thus have a higher flux of high-energy neutrons over a larger volume than any available accelerator source. A subsequent design that took advantage of improvements in accelerator technology is discussed in Ref