

INL cuts ribbon on new research facility

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Marianne Walck, Ph.D., INL's deputy laboratory director for Science and Technology and chief research officer; U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson; Robert Boston, manager of Department of Energy's Idaho Operations Office; and Michael Worley, DOE's director of Innovative Nuclear Research, participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday at the new Research Collaboration Building at the Materials and Fuels Complex at Idaho National Laboratory. The building, which is outside the security fence, will create more space for visiting researchers to interact with INL research staff from MFC.
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U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, speaks to a crowd gathered at the new Research Collaboration Building next to the Materials and Fuels Complex at Idaho National Laboratory on Thursday, after he participated in the ribbon cutting for the building
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Idaho National Laboratory unveiled its latest research building Thursday.

The two-story Research Collaboration Building is located next to the Materials and Fuels Complex at the U.S. Department of Energy desert site. It has 28 offices for MFC researchers, Nuclear Science User Facilities staff and long-term visitors, and 23 work stations and five collaboration stations where INL scientists can work with scientists, researchers and students visiting from universities or other research institutions.

There also is a small non-radiation laboratory that will be used to develop and test instruments and equipment before they are installed in a radiological facility. And, researchers in the Research Collaboration Building will be able to monitor research equipment at INL's Irradiated Material Characterization Laboratory.

The setup will make it easier for INL researchers to collaborate with visitors and share ideas and research, said Mitch Meyer, director of characterization and advanced post-irradiation examination.

"I always say I learn more walking down the halls than I do in a meeting," he said.

The Research Collaboration Building cost \$9.5 million to build. Construction started in March 2018.

U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, the ranking Republican on the Energy and Water subcommittee, helped secure funding for the building when the GOP held the House majority and he was the subcommittee's chairman. Simpson said Thursday he is committed to funding the U.S.'s national laboratories, calling them "the jewels of research in this country," and thanked INL's employees and everyone involved in the project

"It is truly an honor to represent them and to expand the capabilities here of the Idaho National Laboratory," he said.

Bob Boston, the manager of DOE's Idaho Operations Office, reflected on how what would become known as the Materials and Fuels Complex struggled to figure out its mission after Argonne-West became part of the new Idaho National Laboratory in 2005, and how it had expanded its research portfolio since then. He said INL took two important steps by following Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards during construction rather than DOE ones and by putting the new building outside of the site's higher security area.

"We will apply these successful lessons learned to the construction of other projects," he said.

Mike Worley, DOE's acting deputy assistant secretary for reactor fleet and advanced reactor deployment, remembered seeing the project as a concept in a slideshow during the planning stages a few years ago and said he was glad to see it completed. The facility, he said, would help DOE meet its research priorities.

"We are very much looking forward to seeing the facility in action," he said.

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