

IFE decides to close the Halden Reactor, but continues nuclear research activities

IFE's Board of Directors has decided to permanently close the Halden Reactor and to start decommissioning the reactor. IFE will continue its nuclear research activities, with focus on activities that do not depend on the reactor being operational. The closure of the reactor will not affect IFE's other operations.

In conjunction with the license renewal process for the Halden Reactor, IFE has over the last year carried out a strategic review of reactor operations, including a financial and operational risk assessment. Based on this review, IFE's Board concluded that operation of the reactor beyond the current license period is not viable, as this would imply business risks in excess of what IFE is capable of handling on its own. The reactor is currently shut down due to a safety valve failure and will not be restarted.

Operation of the Halden reactor has for several years become increasingly challenging for IFE. IFE has over the past seven years lost over 18 m€ on its nuclear operation, mainly due to the market situation of the Halden reactor. In 2018, IFE has been dependent on extraordinary funding from the Norwegian government.

- Based on a comprehensive strategic review, IFE's Board has concluded that IFE will not apply for a new operating licence after 2020 and that the Halden reactor will not be restarted. IFE cannot rely on governmental funding. Being a self owning foundation, IFE is not able to handle the financial risk of operating the reactor, says Olav Fjell, Chairman of the Board of IFE.

The Boards decision

"The Government contributes funding nuclear waste management and decommissioning, but any further operation of the Halden Reactor will be IFE's responsibility and IFE cannot rely on governmental support for this. IFE does not have the capacity to carry the financial risk of continued operation of the Halden Reactor.

The Board therefore concluded not to apply for new operating license when the current will expire in 2020. The Board also decided to not resume operations of the Halden Reactor. "

The Board's decision was taken against the employees' representatives votes. The closure of the Halden reactor will not affect IFE's other activities. IFE is one of Norway's leading research institutes, conducting R&D at an international level within energy, life science and digitalization. IFE has approx. 650 employees, of which 130 employees work in relation to the Halden reactor.

A strong and proud history

The Halden Reactor is by many countries regarded as a strategic asset for testing fuel and reactor components, vital to improve nuclear safety. Research activities have been carried out since 1958 under the framework of the Halden Project, under the auspice of OECD/NEA. IFE and the Norwegian state remain strongly committed to the Halden Project even though reactor operations discontinue, and will work to develop a revised research program along with OECD/NEA and the members.

- The Halden Project has been the backbone of IFE's operations in Halden since 1958, and has established itself as an international benchmark in nuclear safety research. IFE has built up a significant research database through 60 years of operation and our personnel have long experience and deep knowledge in the field of nuclear research. Even though the Halden Reactor is being closed down, we can continue to exploit this knowledge through other areas of research. We are determined to continue our nuclear research activities to the best for our customers and employees, says Nils Morten Huseby, CEO of IFE.

IFE is not planning any personnel reductions in conjunction with the reactor closure. The Norwegian Government has provided IFE with funding to maintain the staff's critical competence. In addition to continue nuclear research activities, it is envisaged that IFE's personnel will transition into new roles related to decommissioning of the reactor and nuclear waste management.

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