

# **Idaho Falls and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory: A Hidden History of Science and Innovation**

Nestled in the heart of Idaho, the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL) played a pivotal role in the development of nuclear energy and other scientific advancements during the mid-20th century. The book "Idaho Falls and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory 1949-1990" offers a captivating account of this remarkable facility and its profound impact on the region.

In the wake of World War II, the United States embarked on an ambitious program to harness the power of nuclear energy. In 1949, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) established the INEL on a remote stretch of land near Idaho Falls. The facility was initially known as the National Reactor Testing Station (NRTS) and was tasked with developing and testing nuclear reactors for various applications, including power generation and weapons research.

The establishment of the INEL sparked a rapid transformation of Idaho Falls. The city quickly became a magnet for scientists, engineers, and technicians, who flocked to the area in search of employment at the laboratory. The population of Idaho Falls boomed, and the city underwent a rapid modernization, with the construction of new homes, schools, and businesses.

**Coming of Age: Idaho Falls and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory 1949-1990** by Ben J. Plastino



★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 407 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 140 pages



The INEL quickly became a global center for nuclear research and development. Scientists at the laboratory made groundbreaking advancements in reactor design, fuel development, and waste management. They also conducted experiments that contributed to the understanding of nuclear physics and the development of nuclear weapons.

One of the most significant achievements at the INEL was the development of the Boiling Water Reactor (BWR). The BWR was a type of nuclear reactor that used ordinary water as both a coolant and moderator. This design was simpler and more efficient than previous reactors and became widely used in commercial nuclear power plants around the world.

While nuclear energy research remained the primary focus of the INEL, the laboratory also made significant contributions in other scientific fields. Scientists at the INEL conducted groundbreaking research in geothermal energy, nuclear medicine, and environmental science.

The INEL played a crucial role in the development of geothermal energy in the United States. Scientists there conducted experiments that

demonstrated the feasibility of using geothermal fluids to generate electricity. Today, geothermal energy is a major source of renewable energy in many parts of the world.

The INEL's legacy in environmental science is complex. While the laboratory contributed to the development of nuclear technology, it also faced challenges in managing the waste generated by its operations. In the early years, radioactive waste was often disposed of in unlined pits and trenches, leading to contamination of soil and groundwater.

In the 1980s, the INEL became a focus of environmental cleanup efforts. The Department of Energy (DOE) launched a massive project to remove contaminated soil and groundwater from the site. The cleanup process is ongoing and is expected to continue for many years to come.

Today, the INEL continues to operate as a major research and development facility for the DOE. The laboratory's mission has shifted from nuclear weapons development to civilian applications, including nuclear energy, nuclear medicine, and environmental cleanup.

The INEL is also a major employer in the Idaho Falls area, with over 5,000 employees. The laboratory's presence has had a significant economic impact on the region, supporting local businesses and providing high-paying jobs.

"Idaho Falls and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory 1949-1990" is a fascinating account of a hidden history of science and innovation. The book sheds light on the remarkable contributions made by the INEL and its scientists to the development of nuclear energy and other scientific

advancements. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of science, technology, and the American West.

Free Download your copy of "Idaho Falls and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory 1949-1990" today and discover the fascinating story behind one of the most important scientific facilities in the United States.

### Alt Attributes

- **Hidden History of Science and Innovation in Idaho Falls:** Image of the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory (INEL) campus in the 1950s.
- **Birth of the Atomic City:** Photograph of the NRTS construction site in 1949.
- **Pioneering Nuclear Technology:** Close-up of a Boiling Water Reactor (BWR) at the INEL.
- **Beyond Nuclear Energy:** Photo of scientists conducting geothermal energy research at the INEL.
- **Environmental Legacy:** Image of a radioactive waste disposal site at the INEL in the 1950s.
- **The INEL Today:** Aerial view of the INEL campus as it appears today.



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