

Recycling system is ready for lab testing

A nuclear system for recycling human wastes into potable water and converting spacecraft wastes to easily stored ash during months-long advanced laboratory testing.

The water recovery-waste incineration system, which is fueled by plutonium-238, was developed by Atomic Energy Commission in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the U.S. Air Force. General Electric, which built the system under AEC contract, will build a flight type model for 180

days beginning in June at GE's Missiles and Space Division at King of Prussia, Pa. Manned tests in a space simulator will be held later.

The system collects and recycles urine, washwater, cabin condensate, feces, cabin trash and food particles along with containers, plastic, clothing items and other non-metallic scraps. At least 98 percent of all liquid waste processed by the system is recoverable as sterile water meeting the highest standards of purity. Solid waste, after all moisture is removed, is incinerated into an

ash having a volume about 100 times less than the original product.

Solid wastes are fed into a shredder, then pumped into an incinerator-sterilizer. The liquids move into the evaporator which heats the material under vacuum. The water vapor is then piped into the pyrolysis unit where it is sterilized. The vapor is then condensed and goes into storage as sterile water.

Drinking, washing and other water needs total an estimated 15 pounds per astronaut per day. Space and launch restrictions rule

out an on-board water supply for extended missions. The new water recovery device, which weighs about 750 pounds, is designed for a minimum operation of six months and a maximum mission of three years or longer. The plutonium-238 fuel has a half life of 87.8 years.

Processing the waste materials requires about 1,270 watts of power which is provided by heat energy from the system's own plutonium fuel supply. Power from the spacecraft's system is used only to operate the device's pumps, fans and controls.

AEC has allocated over the past three years approximately \$560,000 toward the \$1 million-plus project; NASA, \$470,000; and the Air Force, \$140,000.

Mound Laboratory at Miami, Ohio, is fabricating the isotopic heat source for the device. Mound is operated for AEC by Monsanto Research Corp. Program direction is being handled by NASA's Manned Space Flight Center at Huntsville, Alabama. Technical assistance is furnished by the Air Force's Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base

Engineering short courses planned for later this month

Three short courses for practicing engineers will be conducted June 19-30 under the sponsorship of the Electric Power Institute of the A&M Department of Electrical Engineering, announced Prof. John S. Denison, institute director.

A two-week course entitled "Semiconductor Circuits for Power System Engineers" begins June 19 with Dr. W. L. Beasley,

assistant professor of electrical engineering, teaching.

The course is designed to update engineers who completed their college program before semiconductors were included in the curriculum, Denison said.

A one-week course in symmetrical components which also opens June 19 will provide the practicing engineer with analytical techniques for solving electric power systems under unbalanced conditions such as system faults, Denison continued.

A second course in the same subject will be held June 26-30. Instruction will be conducted both weeks by Dr. Robert Chenoweth, professor, Dr. A. K. Ayoub, associate professor, and Denison.

Denison said engineers from Texas and nearby states have enrolled for the three classes.

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