

CUSTOMER STATEMENT

Friday, 2 August 2019

Update: Postponement of planned shutdowns

OPAL Reactor Planned Maintenance Shutdown

Due to circumstances beyond ANSTO's control, the planned extended maintenance shutdown of the OPAL multi-purpose reactor from 7 September to 6 October 2019 has now been postponed.

ANSTO has decided to delay the extended shutdown as there was no alternative international supply of the commonly used nuclear medicine, Mo-99, available to ensure it would not have an impact on Australian patients.

ANSTO has undertaken a full risk assessment and the delay will not compromise the safety of operations. At this stage ANSTO anticipates the extended shutdown will be re-scheduled within the next 6 months but this will be confirmed following consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

ANSTO will undertake a standard maintenance and refuelling shutdown of the OPAL Reactor in September 2019. This standard shutdown will not impact nuclear medicine supply.

Building 23 – ANSTO Gentech® Production

In concert with this decision, the three-week extended shutdown of the nuclear medicine production facility (Building 23) scheduled for 21 October to 12 November 2019 has been cancelled.

The timing of this proposed shutdown had been complicated by the reduced production of ANM as a result of the safety incident on 21 June 2019 and the resulting amendment to ANM's operational licence by the CEO of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). That amendment restricts production at the facility to two runs per week, enough to meet domestic demand only.

In order to meet domestic demand during the shutdown, ANSTO had been planning to ship bulk Mo-99 produced using the reactor and the ANM facility to the United States for loading into generators (similar to the arrangement used during the 2018 supply disruptions). However, as a result of the limitation to two runs per week, ANSTO would not have sufficient Mo-99 to make this strategy work.

Similar to the situation with the OPAL shutdown, ANSTO Health and ANSTO Engineering undertook a detailed review of the tasks which were scheduled to be undertaken during the shutdown. That review concluded that only two of the tasks required the facility to be offline. As such, the other maintenance activities will be completed over the coming months while the facility remains in production.

The two remaining tasks will be postponed until the scheduled April 2020 shutdown. Neither of those tasks are judged to be critical to safety or production reliability.

Lu-177 has undertaken regular annual preventative maintenance since its introduction in 2014. This is typically around October for a duration of approximately 3 weeks. Given the security of back up supply from ITG Germany, the planned maintenance activities will still occur. ANSTO will confirm the final dates when known.