



Critical Experiment Training at Sandia National Laboratories

International Conference on Nuclear Criticality

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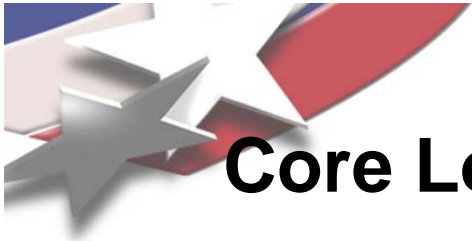
Experiment 1

Approach to Critical on Fuel Loading

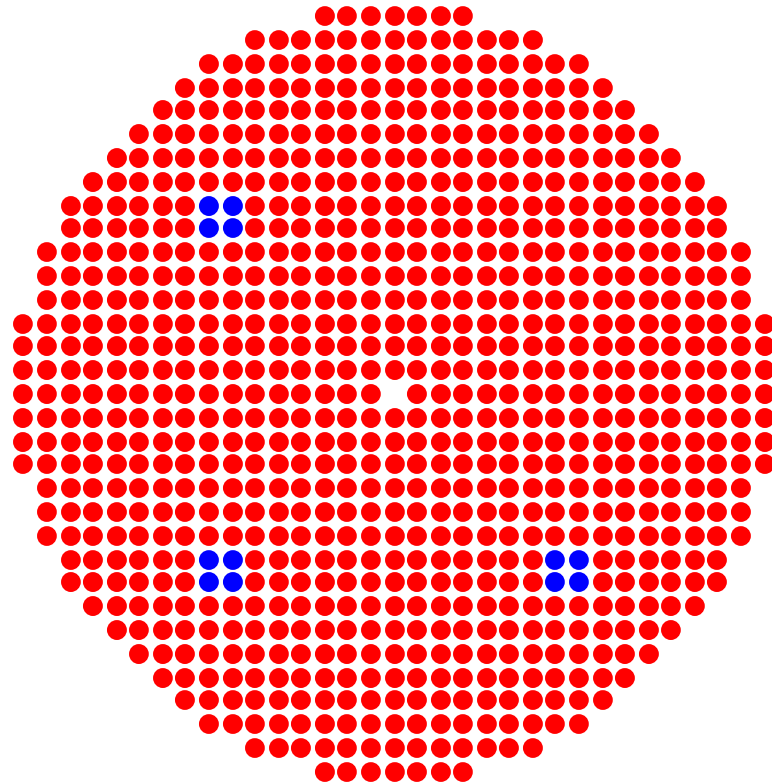


Experiment 1 Overview

- **We perform an approach-to-critical experiment by loading fuel into the fully-reflected assembly**
- **This is the way we normally perform experiments**
- **Criticality safety parameters that are in play:**
 - **Mass**
 - **Moderation**
 - **Reflection**
 - **Absorption**
- **Application to criticality safety:**
 - **What happens when the number of fuel lumps in an array increases?**

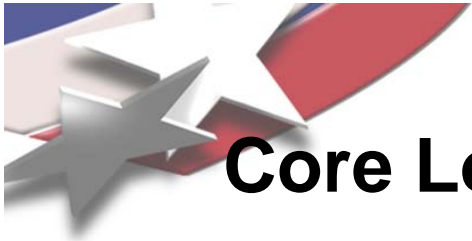


Core Loading Experiment Configuration 1

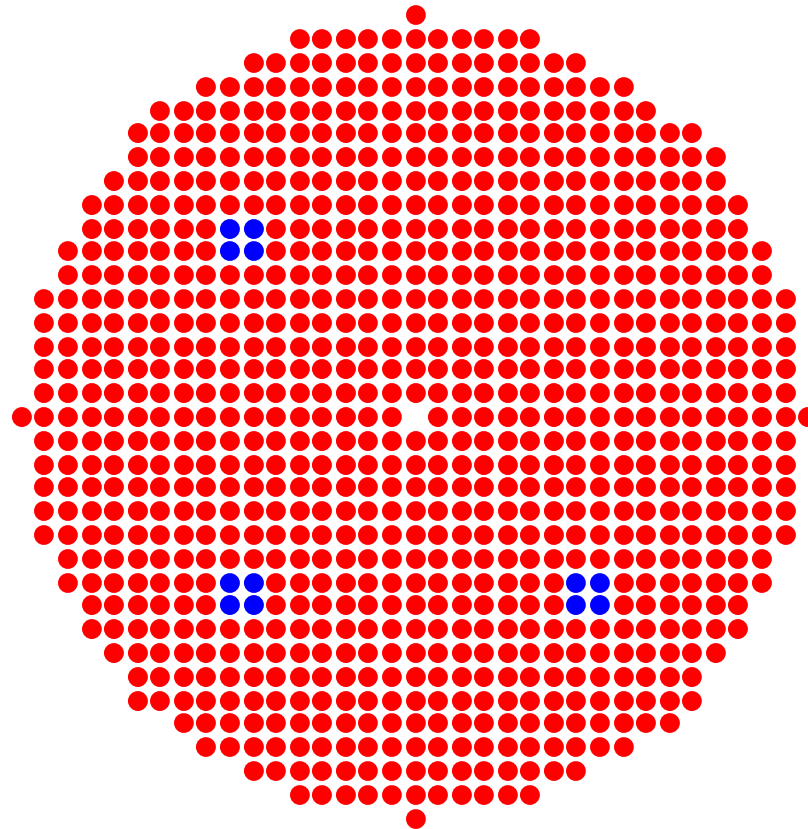


Fuel Rods: 836

$k \sim 0.95$



Core Loading Experiment Configuration 2

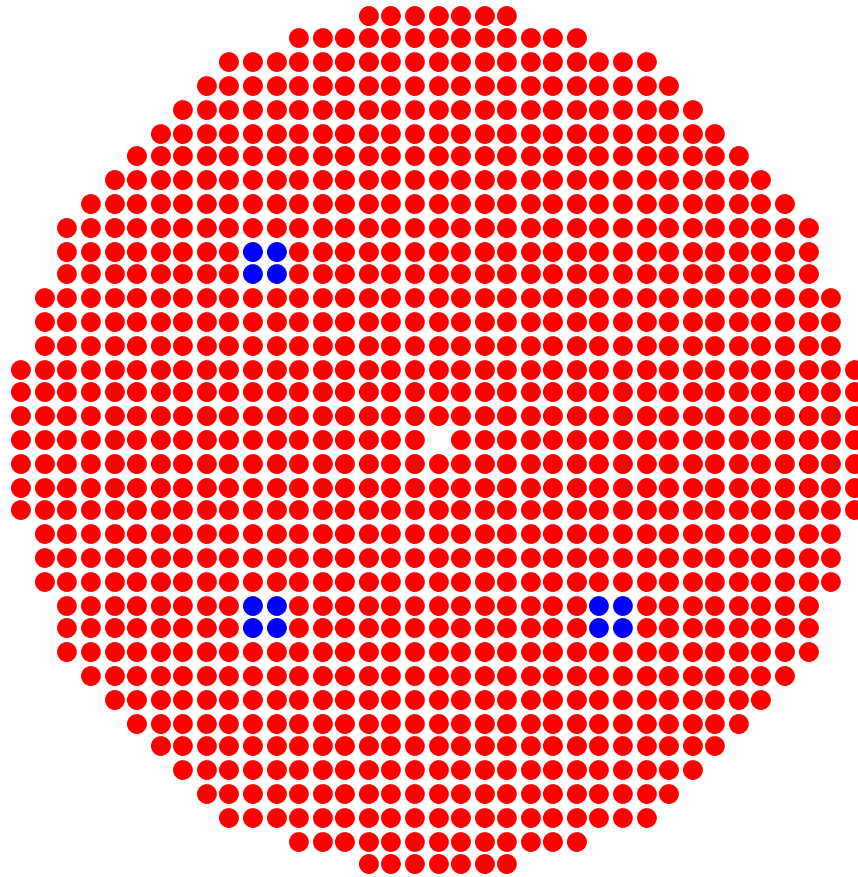


Fuel Rods: 895

$k \sim 0.97$



~Critical Core Loading



Fuel Rods: ???

$k \sim 1.00$



Mechanics of the Experiment

- The number of fuel rods in the core changes
- The fuel configurations are guided by the count rates
- The class sorts the fuel rods and pass them to the operations staff
- The operations staff places fuel rods in the core
- The minimum fuel increment is eight rods

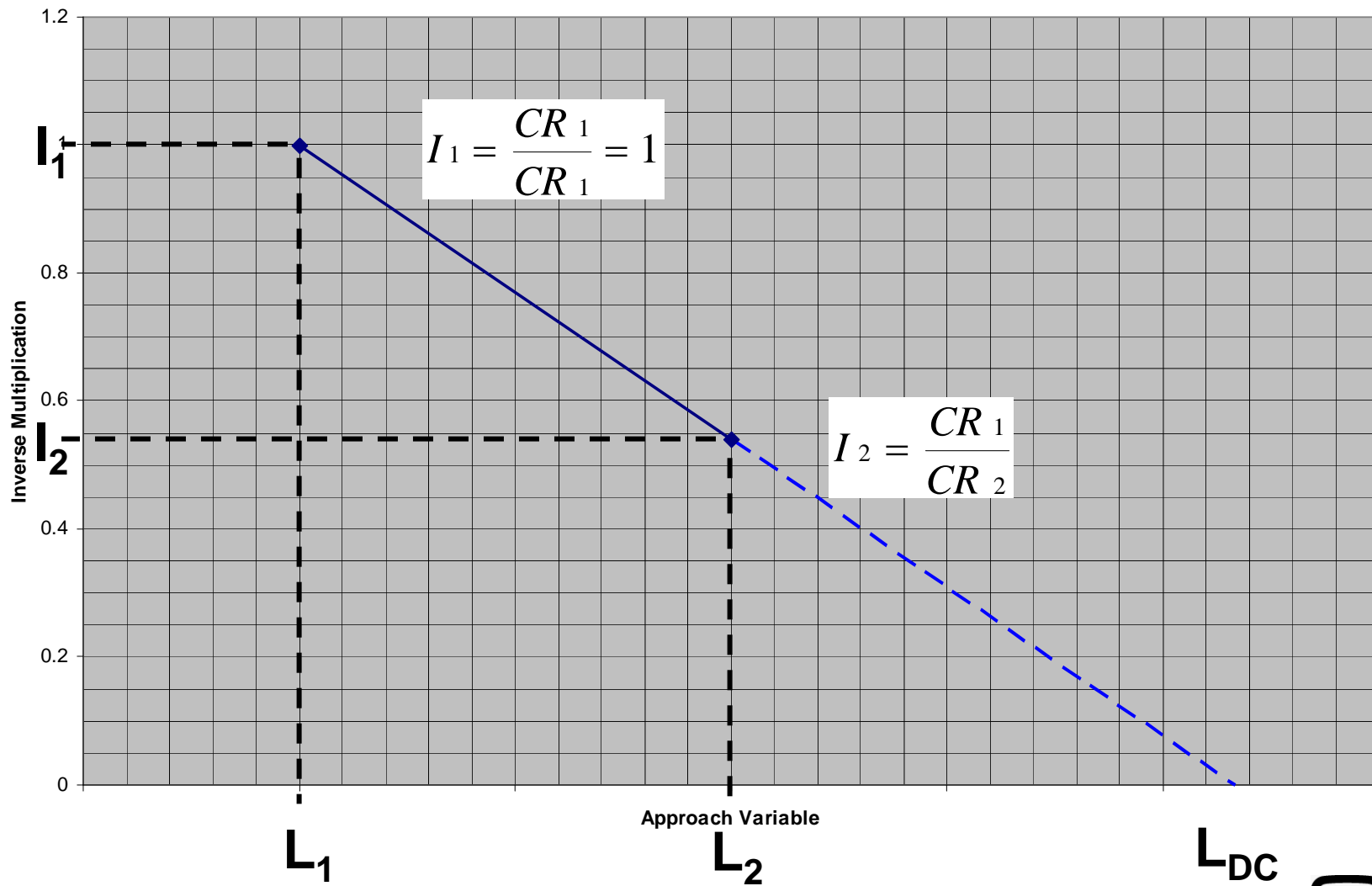


The Experiment Process

- The desired fuel rod array is loaded
- The safety rods are “cocked”
- The reactor room is cleared
- The core tank is filled with water
- The control rod is raised – this puts the assembly in its most reactive condition in this operational mode
- Counts are taken
- The core tank is drained
- The control rod is lowered
- The safety rods are dropped
- The next fuel increment is determined from the count rates
- The reactor room is opened
- Loop back to the first step on this page

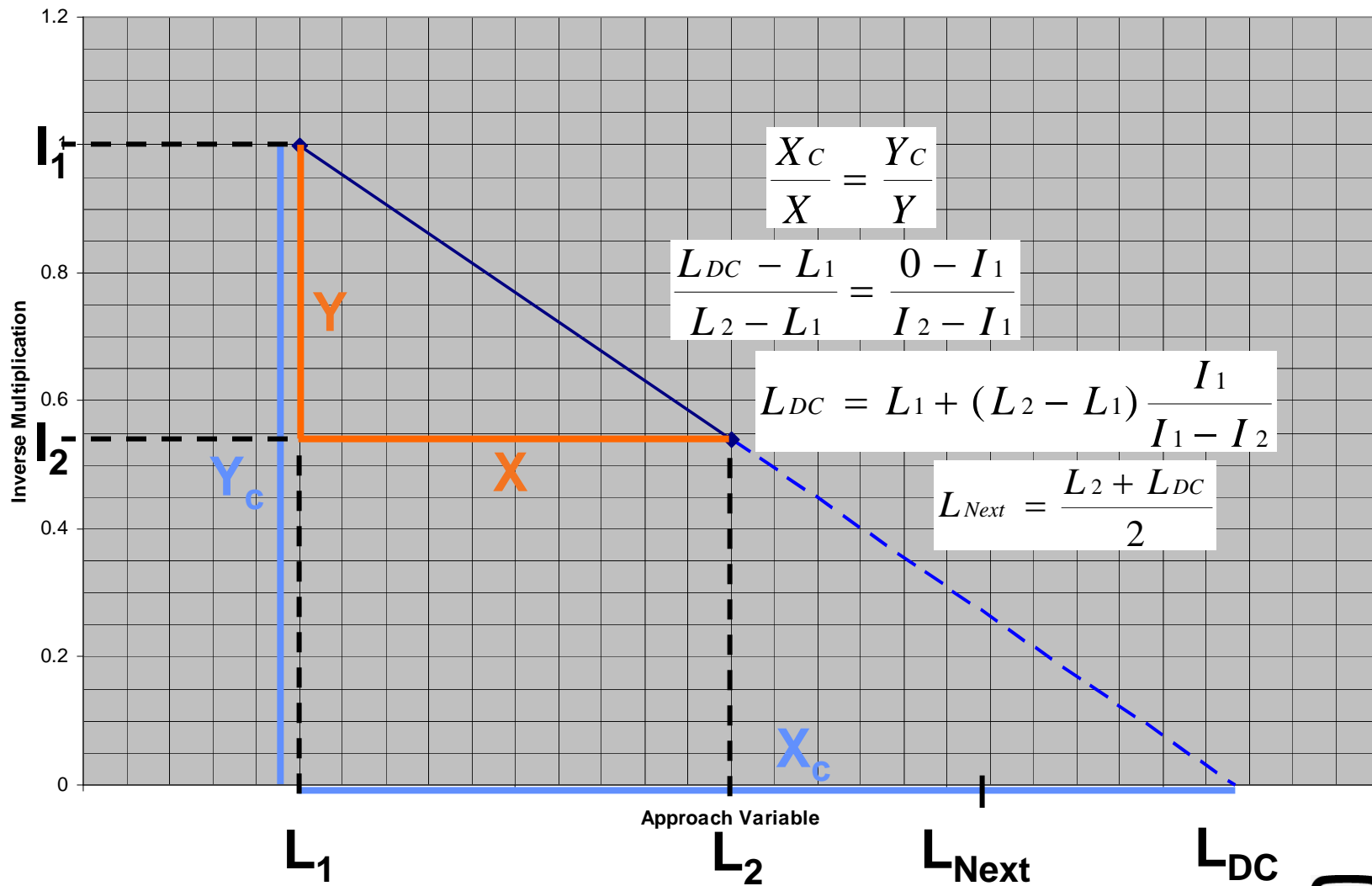


Determining the Next Fuel Increment



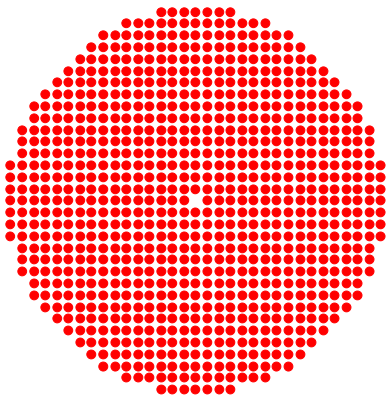


Determining the Next Fuel Increment

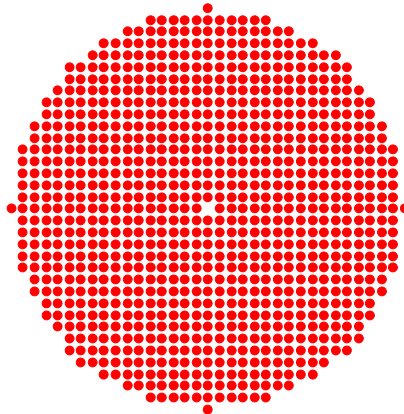




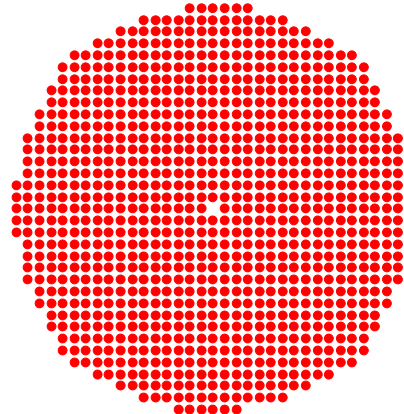
8/16/2011 Approach on Fuel Loading



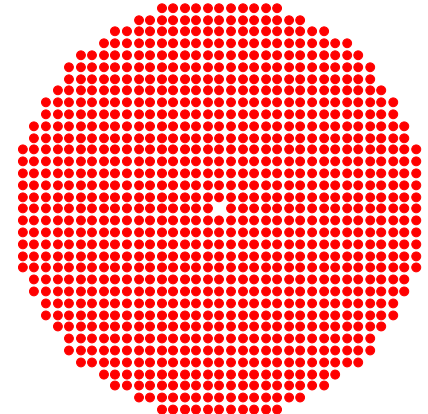
836



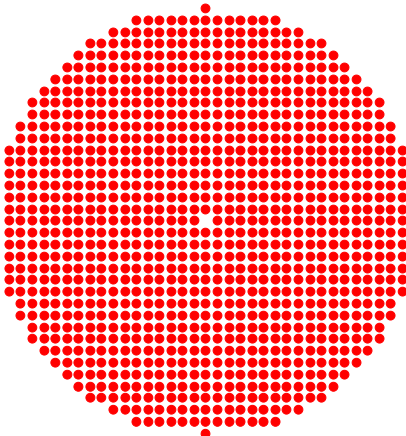
895



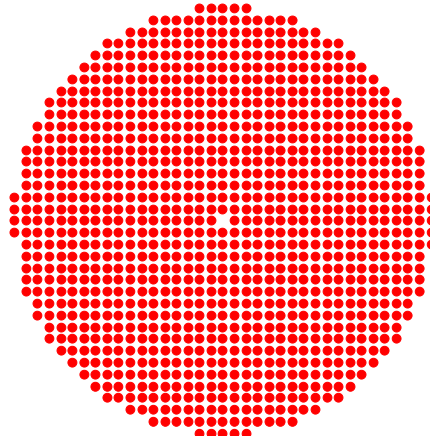
950



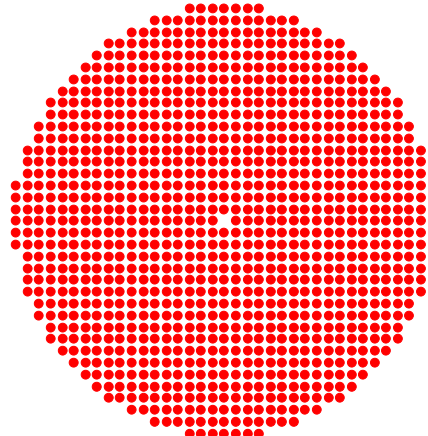
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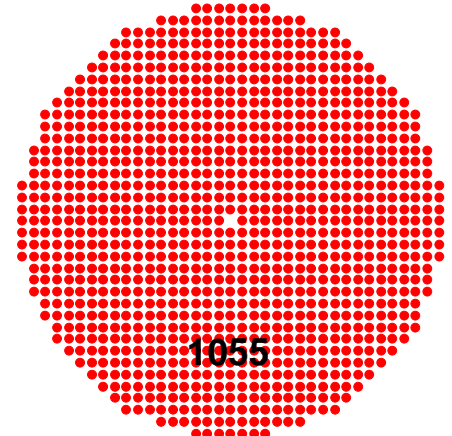
1022



1039



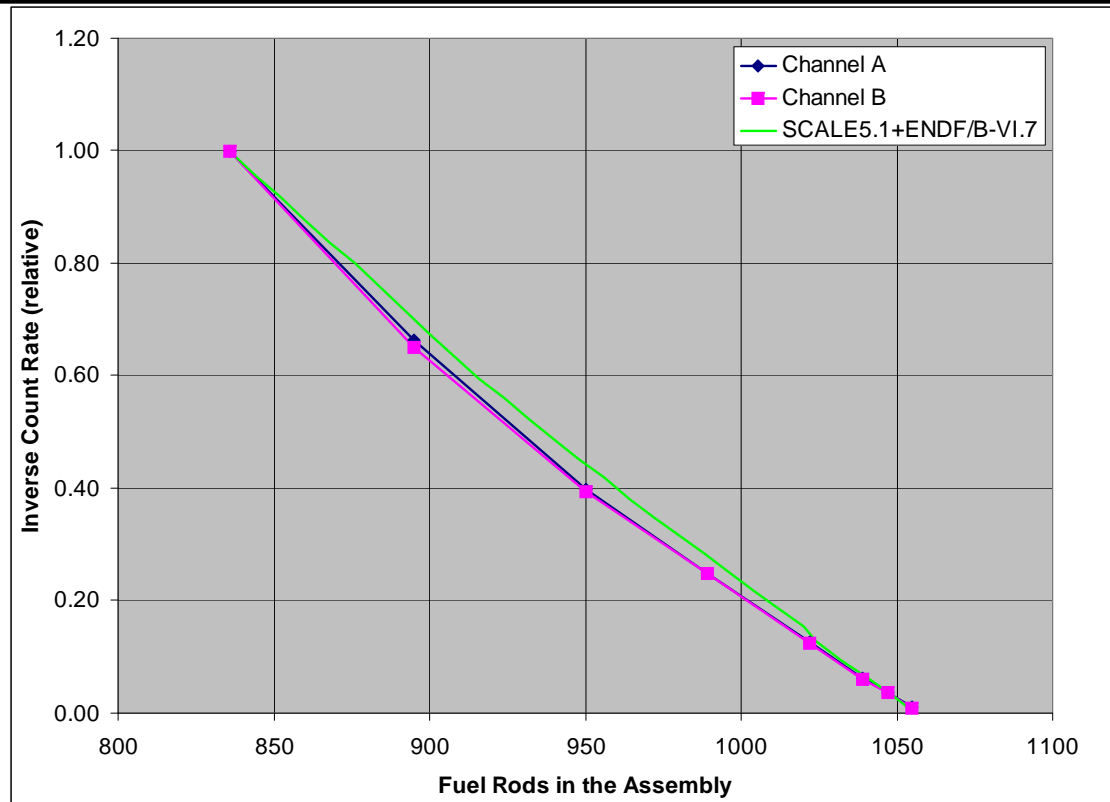
1047



1055



8/16/2011 Approach on Fuel Loading



Rods	Count Rate		Inverse Count Rate		Channel A		Channel B	
	Ch. A	Ch. B	Ch. A	Ch. B	Projected	Next	Projected	Next
836	6130	5632	1.0000	1.0000				
895	9237	8655	0.6636	0.6507	1011.40	953.20	1004.92	949.96
950	15377	14292	0.3986	0.3941	1032.74	991.37	1034.45	992.22
989	24647	22716	0.2487	0.2479	1053.69	1021.35	1055.17	1022.08
1022	48744	45195	0.1258	0.1246	1055.75	1038.88	1055.35	1038.67
1039	98406	93457	0.0623	0.0603	1055.69	1047.34	1054.92	1046.96
1047	165607	156219	0.0370	0.0361	1058.71	1052.86	1058.91	1052.96
1055	626813	596754	0.0098	0.0094	1057.87	1056.44	1057.84	1056.42



Experiment 2

Approach to Critical on Moderator Height

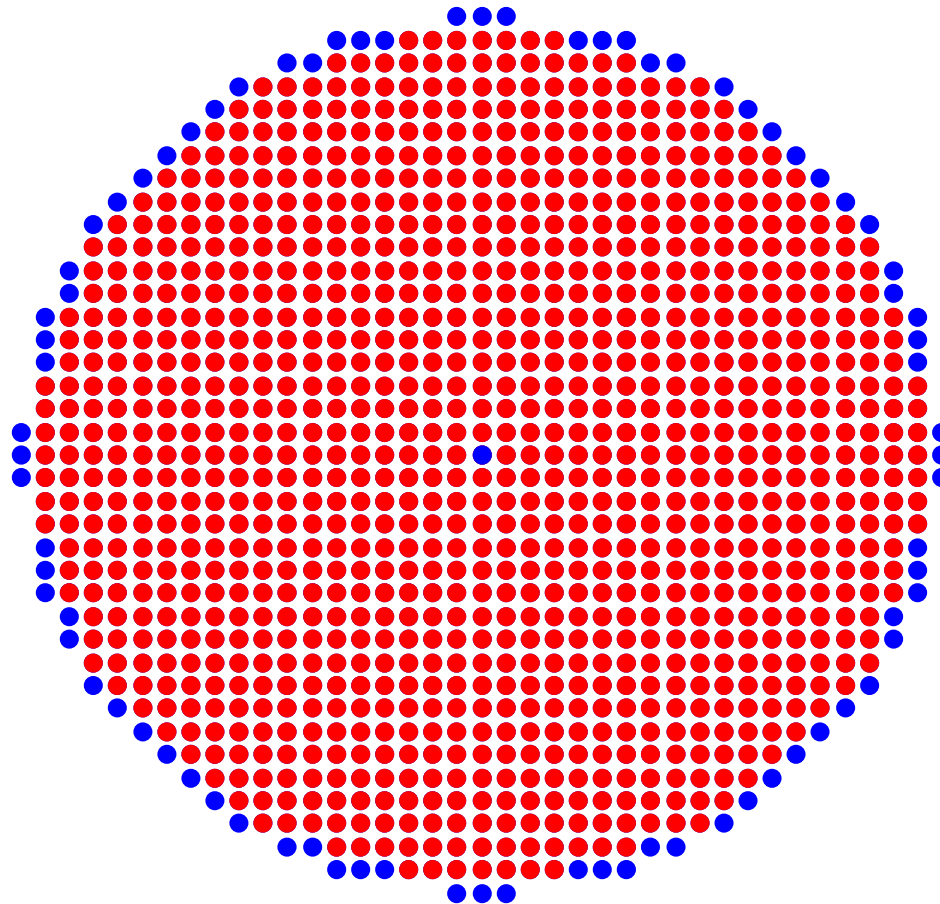


Experiment 2 Overview

- **We perform an approach-to-critical experiment by increasing the moderator height in the assembly**
- **Criticality safety parameters that are in play:**
 - Moderation
 - Geometry
 - Absorption
 - Mass
- **Application to criticality safety:**
 - What happens to an array that becomes flooded?



The Fuel Rod Configuration

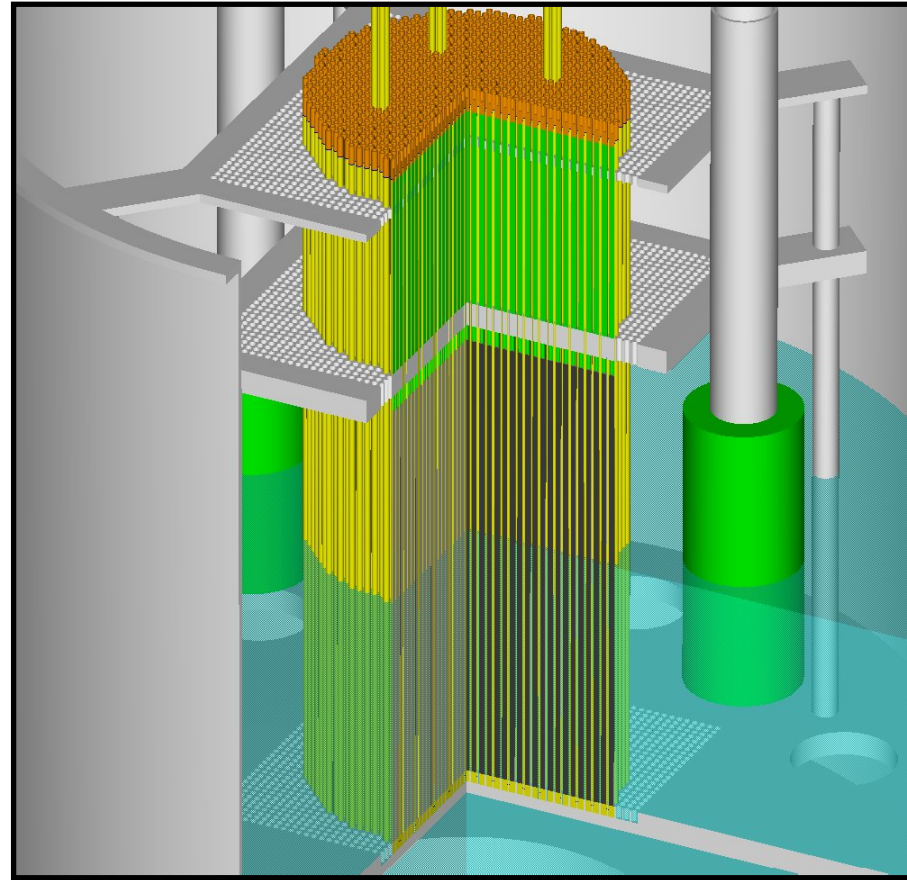


1137 fuel rods

**The blue rods are the difference from the fully-reflected
critical array in the first experiment**



Moderator Height Experiment Configuration 1



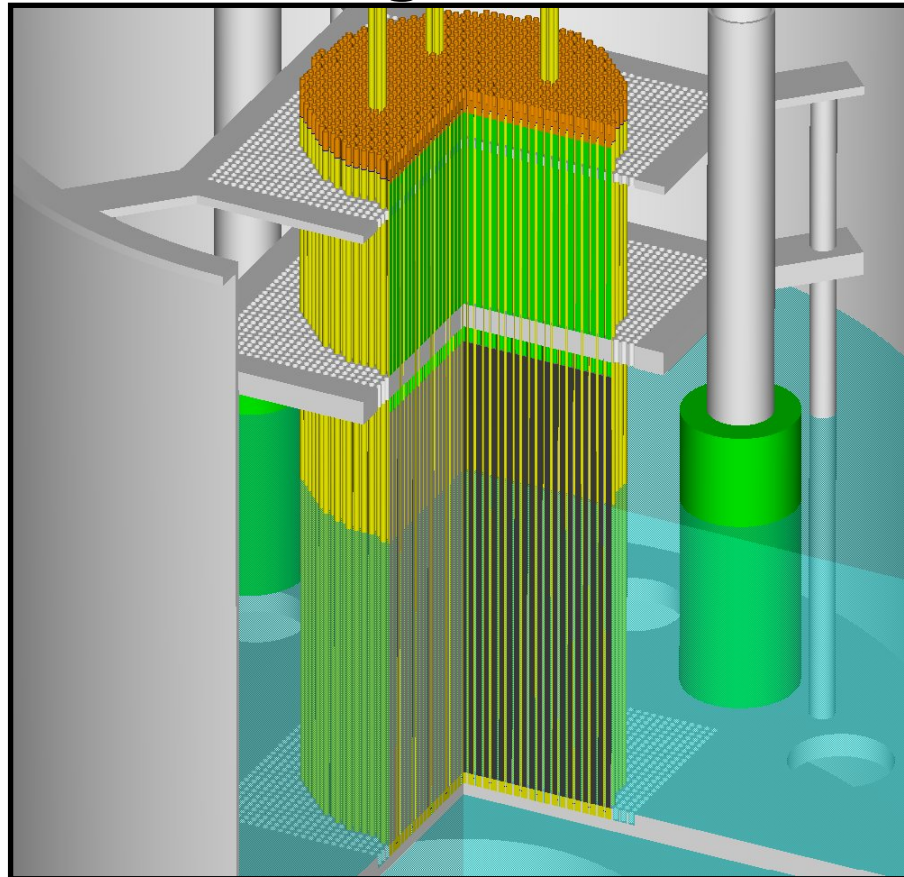
Fuel Rods: 1137

k_{eff} : ~0.90

Water Depth: 271.6 mm



Moderator Height Experiment Configuration 2



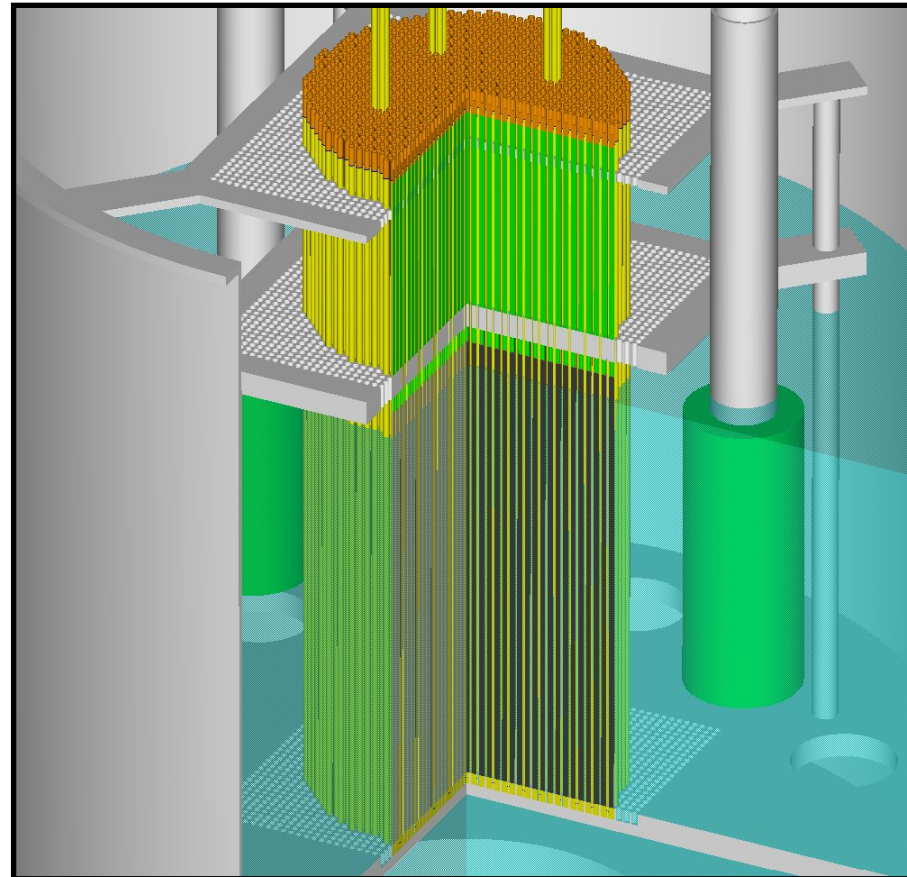
Fuel Rods: 1137

k_{eff} : ~0.95

Water Depth: 341.3 mm



Moderator Height Experiment at DC



Fuel Rods: 1137

k_{eff} : ~1.0

Water Depth: 461 mm



Mechanics of the Experiment

- The number of fuel rods in the core is constant
- The approach-to-critical is done with the depth of the moderator in the core tank as the free parameter
- The choice of water depth is guided by the count rates
- This approach is done remotely (we don't go into the reactor room)
- The minimum water height increment is 5 mm

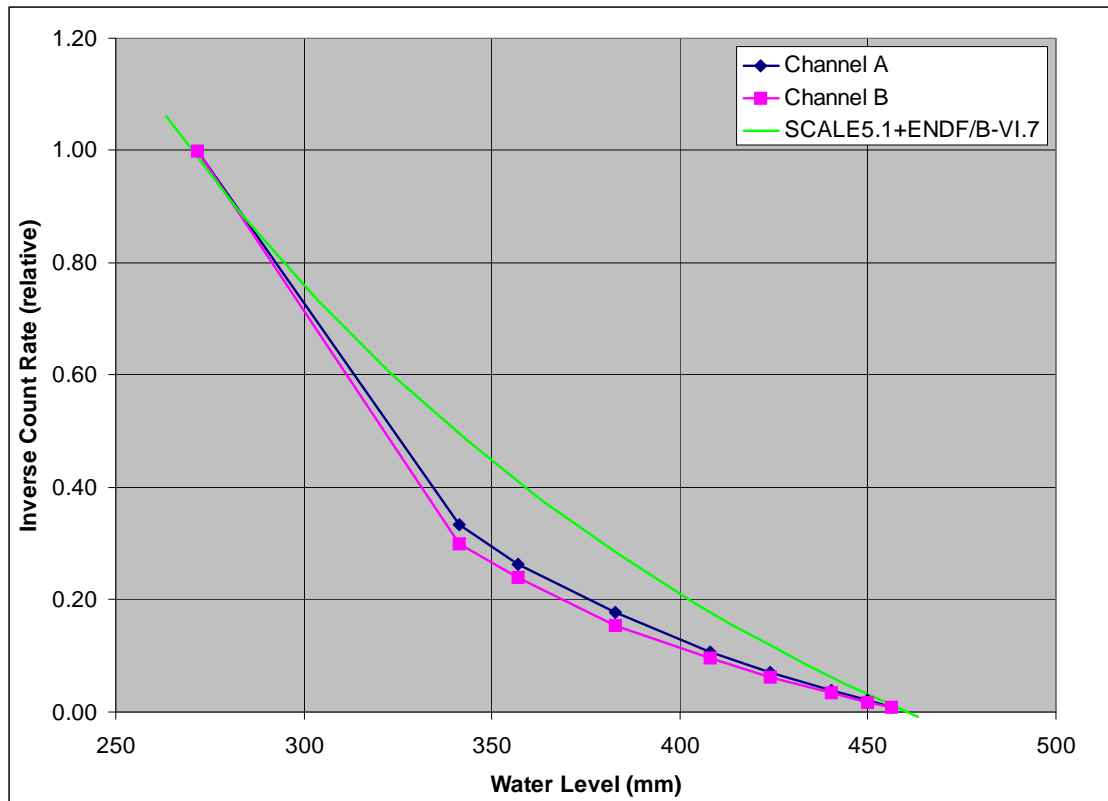


The Experiment Process

- The desired fuel rod array is loaded
- The safety rods are “cocked”
- The reactor room is cleared
- The core tank is filled with water to the height that gives a calculated k_{eff} of about 0.90
- The control rod is raised
- The slow pump is turned on – the water height in the core is controlled by the setting of the overflow standpipe
- When the water level in the core tank reaches the standpipe, counts were taken [A]
- The next water level is determined from the previous two counts
- The standpipe is set for the new water level
- Loop back to the step marked [A]



8/17/2011 Approach on Moderator Level



Water Level	Count Rate		Inverse Count Rate		Channel A		Channel B	
	Ch. A	Ch. B	Ch. A	Ch. B	Projected	Next	Projected	Next
271.7	1034	853	1.0000	1.0000				
341.4	3108	2847	0.3327	0.2996	376.15	358.77	371.22	356.31
357	3917	3565	0.2640	0.2393	416.93	386.97	418.86	387.93
382.9	5826	5521	0.1775	0.1545	436.04	409.47	430.11	406.50
408	9687	8939	0.1067	0.0954	445.87	426.94	448.54	428.27
424.1	14600	13547	0.0708	0.0630	455.84	439.97	455.33	439.72
440.2	26853	25241	0.0385	0.0338	459.38	449.79	458.85	449.53
450	50723	48777	0.0204	0.0175	461.02	455.51	460.51	455.25
456.1	113530	108681	0.0091	0.0078	461.03	458.56	461.07	458.58



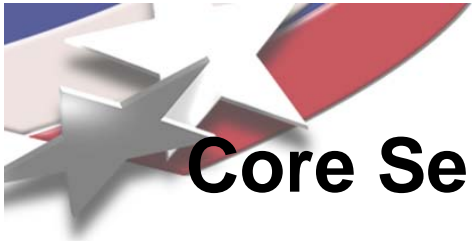
Experiment 3

Approach to Critical on Fuel Lump Separation

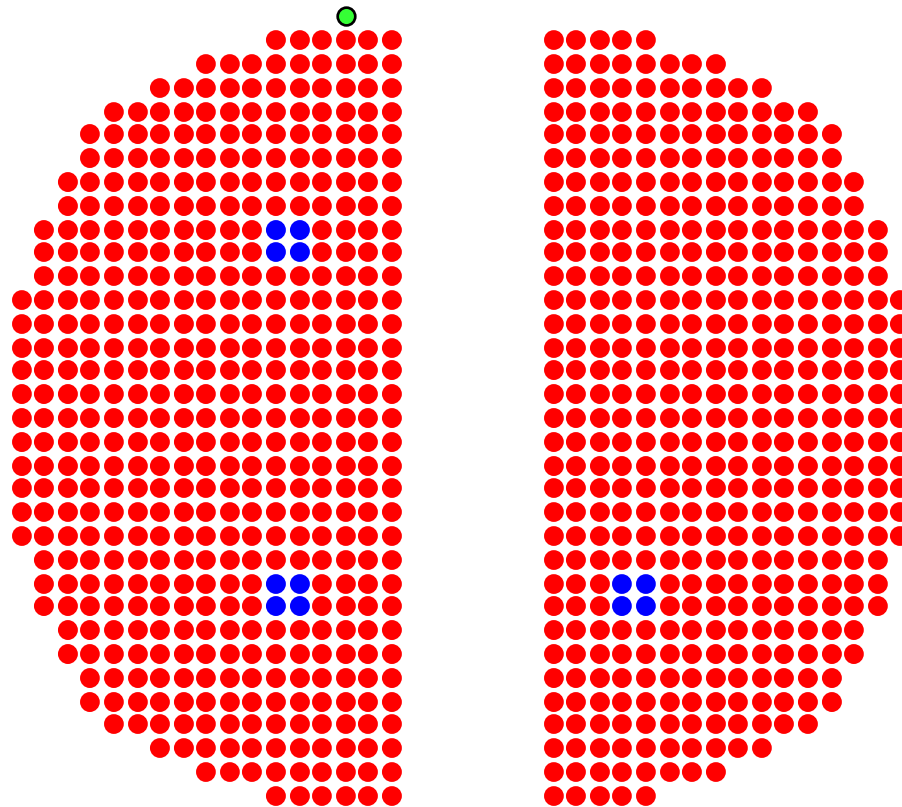


Experiment 3 Overview

- We perform an approach-to-critical experiment by moving two roughly equal fuel lumps toward each other
- This simulates experiments done with a horizontal split table machine
- Criticality safety parameters that were in play:
 - Interaction
 - Moderation
- Application to criticality safety:
 - What happens as two fuel masses are moved progressively closer to one another?
 - What happens when two neighboring fuel masses are moved apart?
 - This experiment is applicable to many accident configurations.

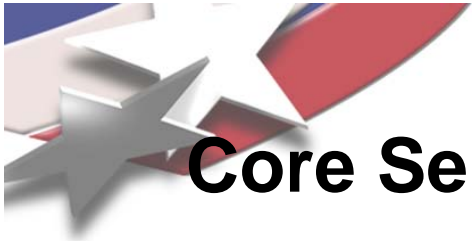


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

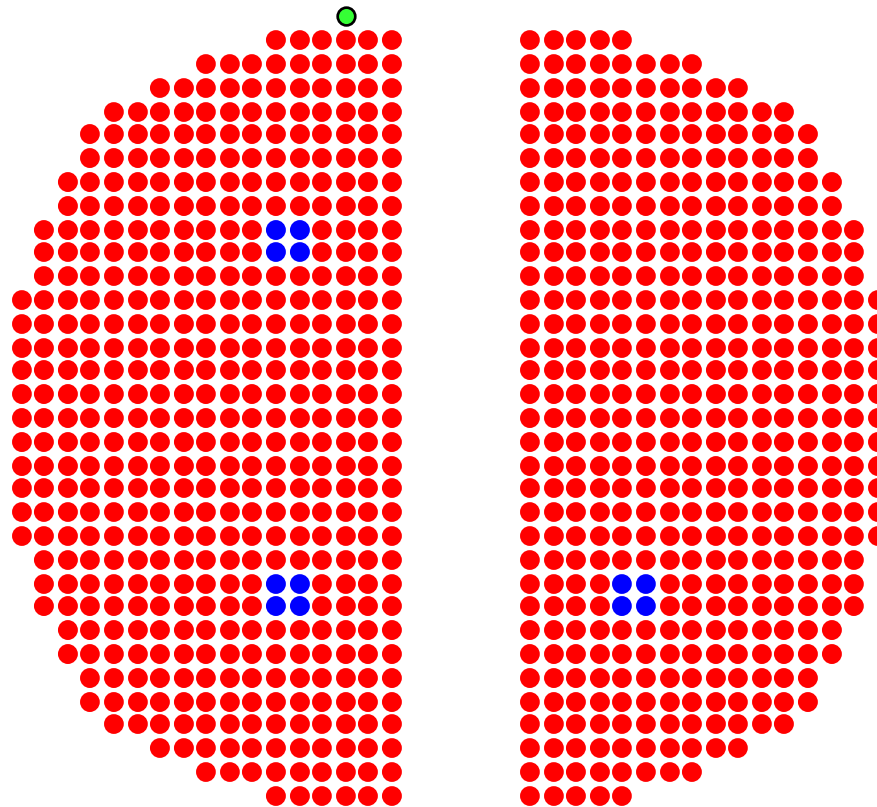


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 5.130 cm

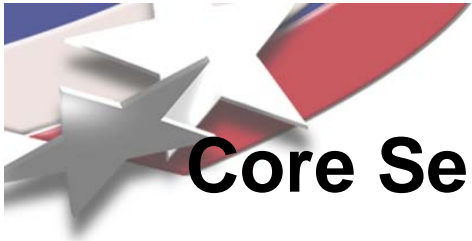


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

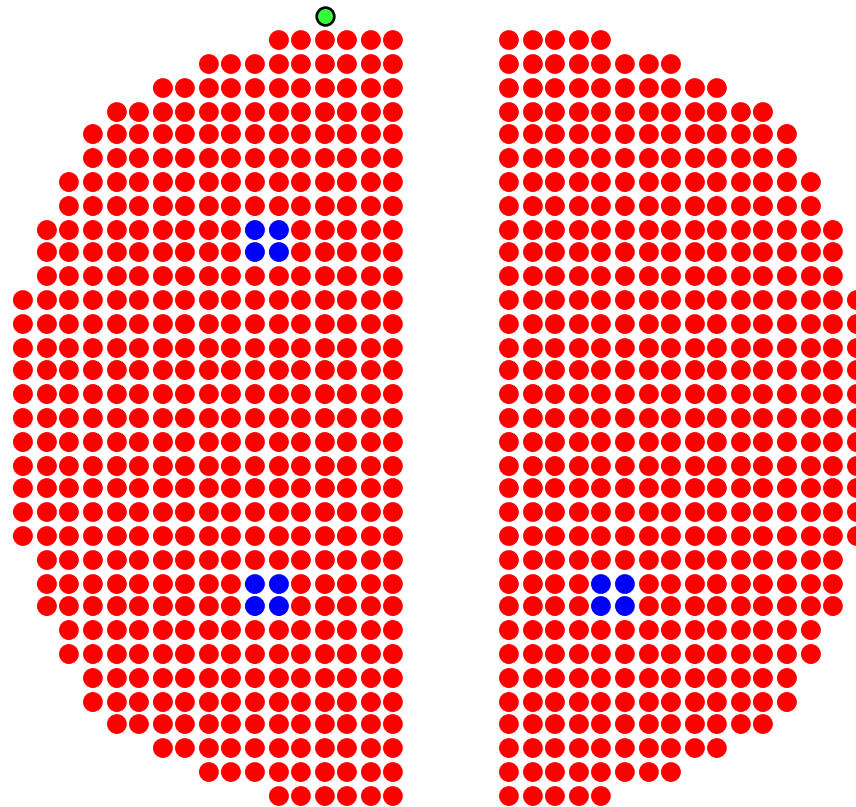


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 4.275 cm

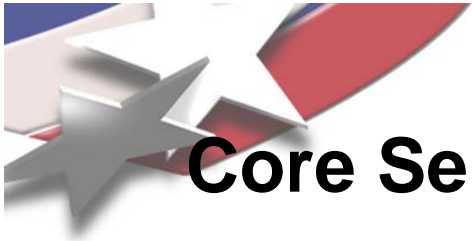


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

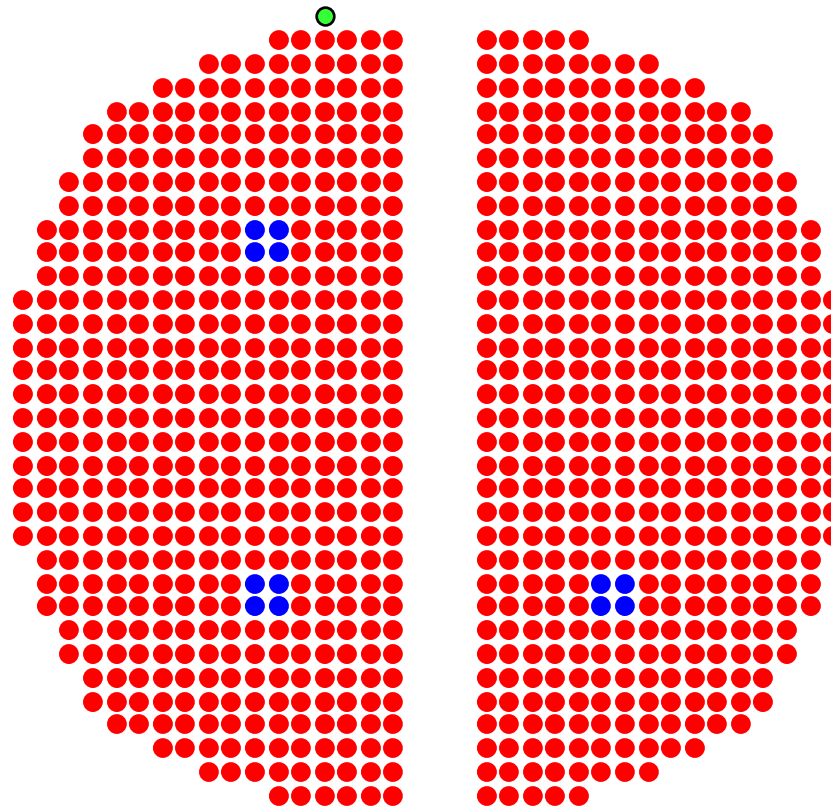


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 3.420 cm

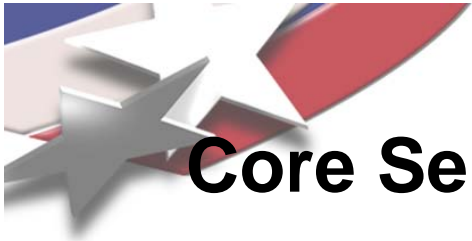


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

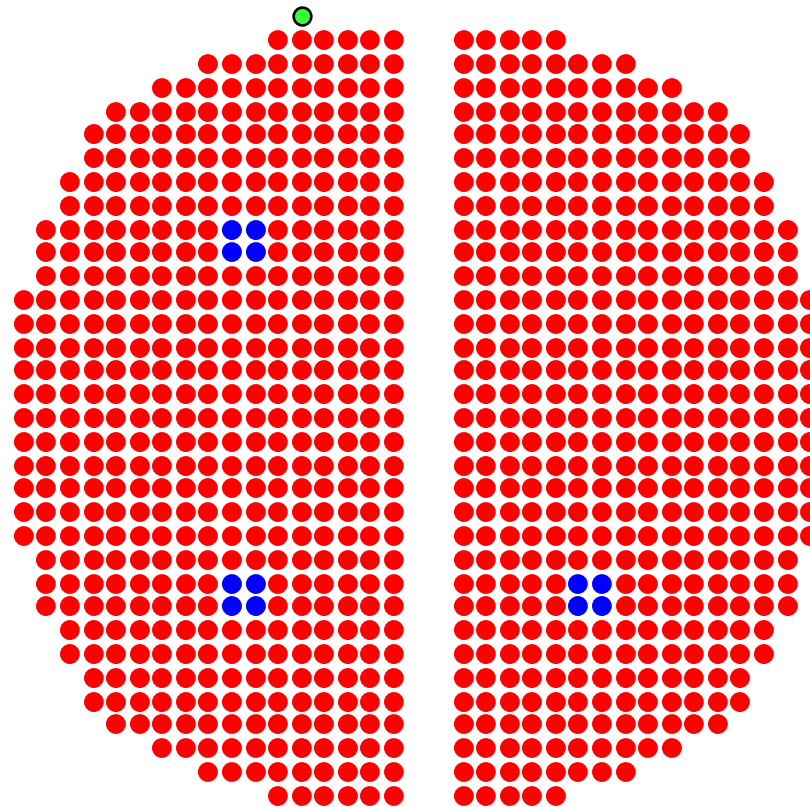


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 2.565 cm

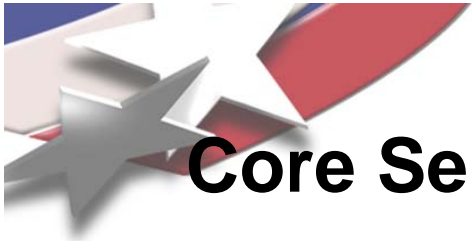


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

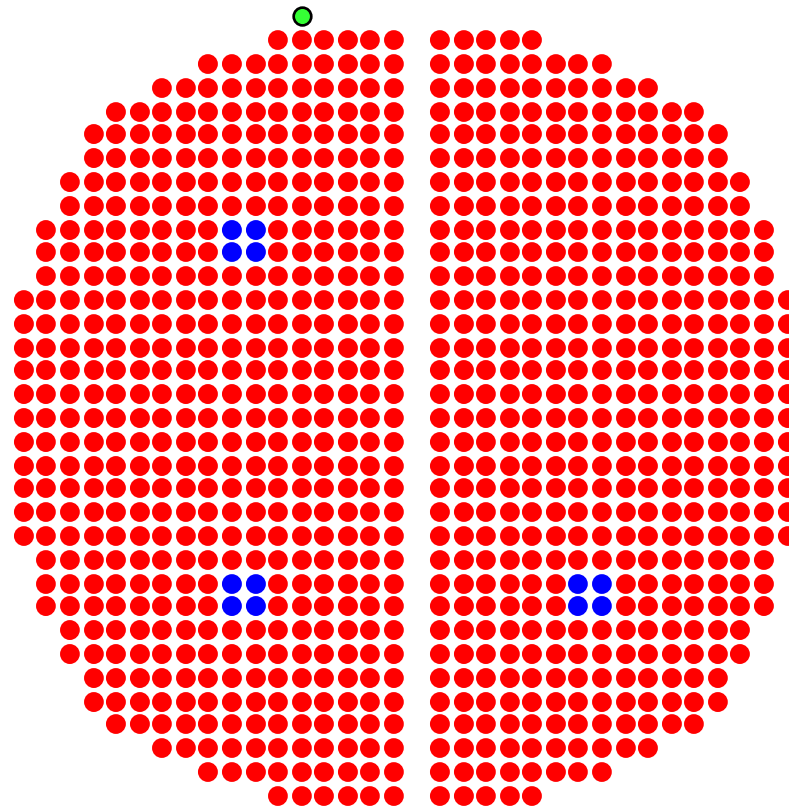


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 1.710 cm

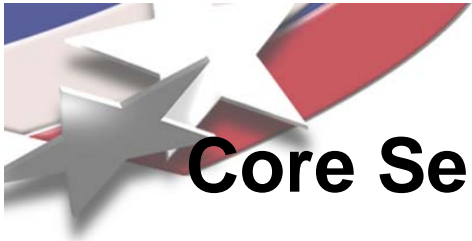


Core Separation Experiment Configurations

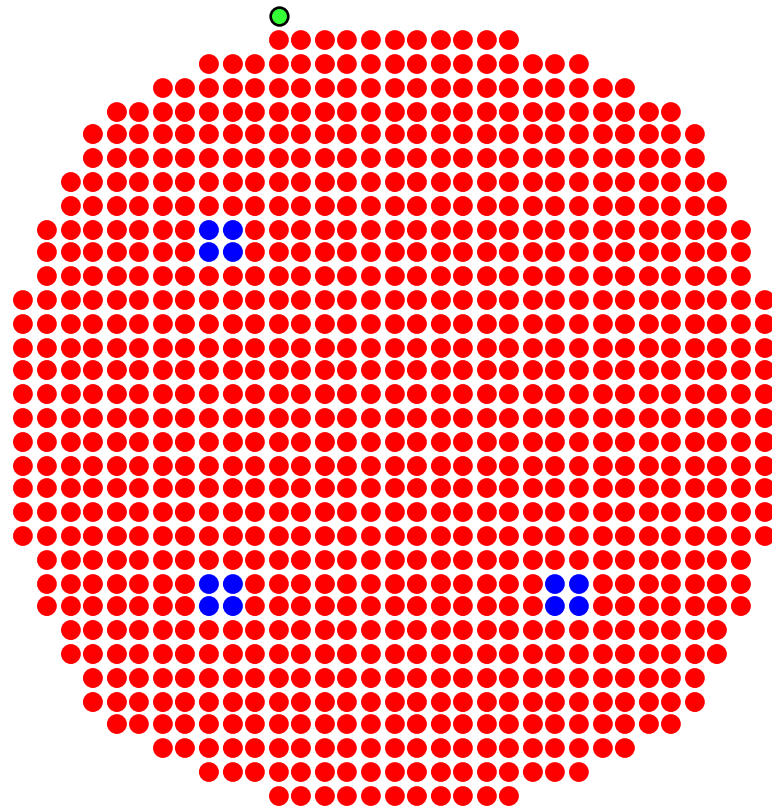


Fuel Rods: 477 (left) + 444 (right) = 921 (total)

Separation: 0.855 cm



Core Separation Experiment Configurations



Fuel Rods: 921



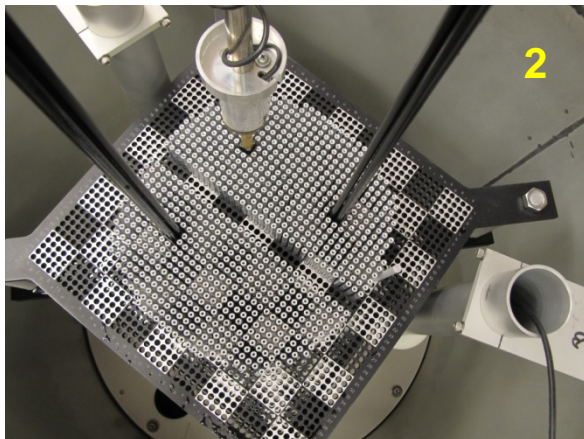
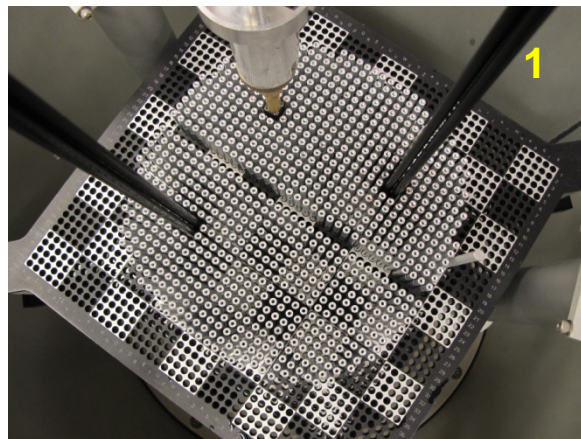
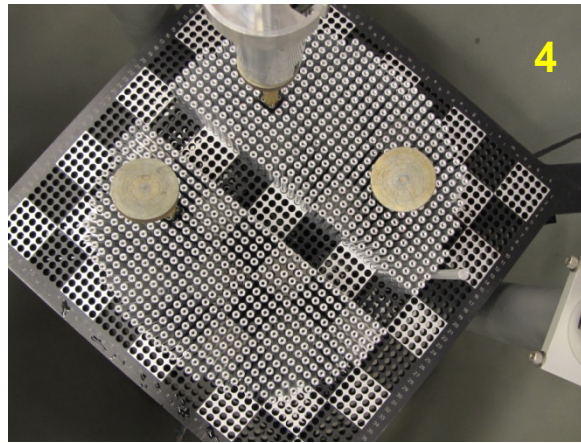
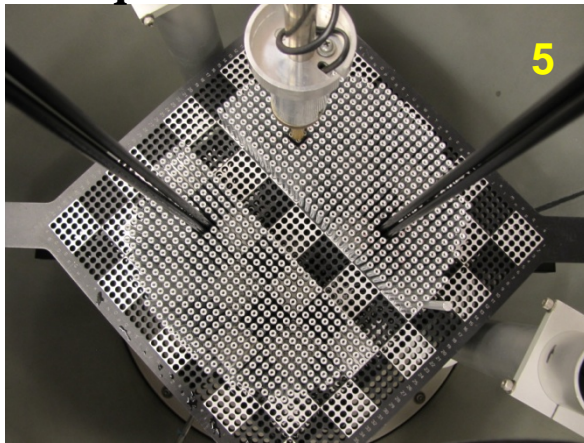
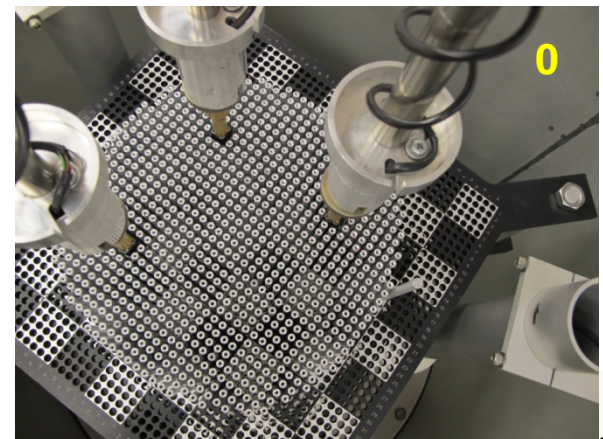
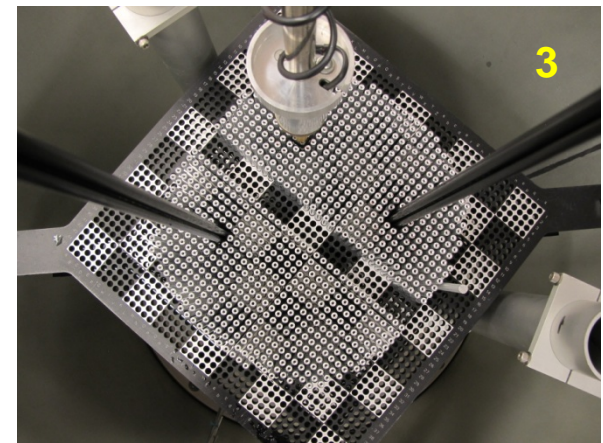
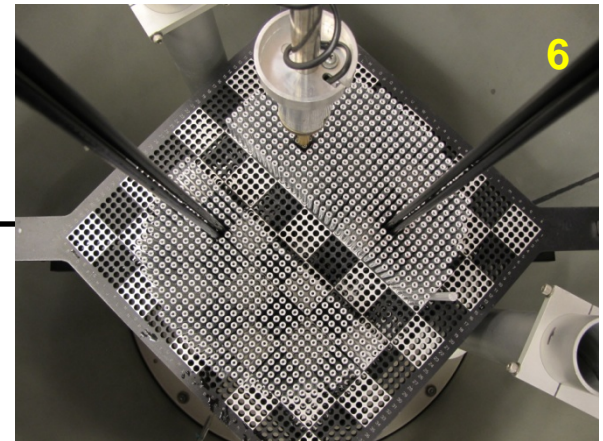
Mechanics of the Experiment

- The number of fuel rods in the core is constant
- The separation of the fuel masses is adjusted by moving fuel rods from location to location in the core
- The operations staff performs all the fuel movements
- This is a DEMONSTRATION
 - We record data and make projections to critical as we would in an approach-to-critical experiment
 - We change the separation by full rows of fuel rods, not according to the results of our projections



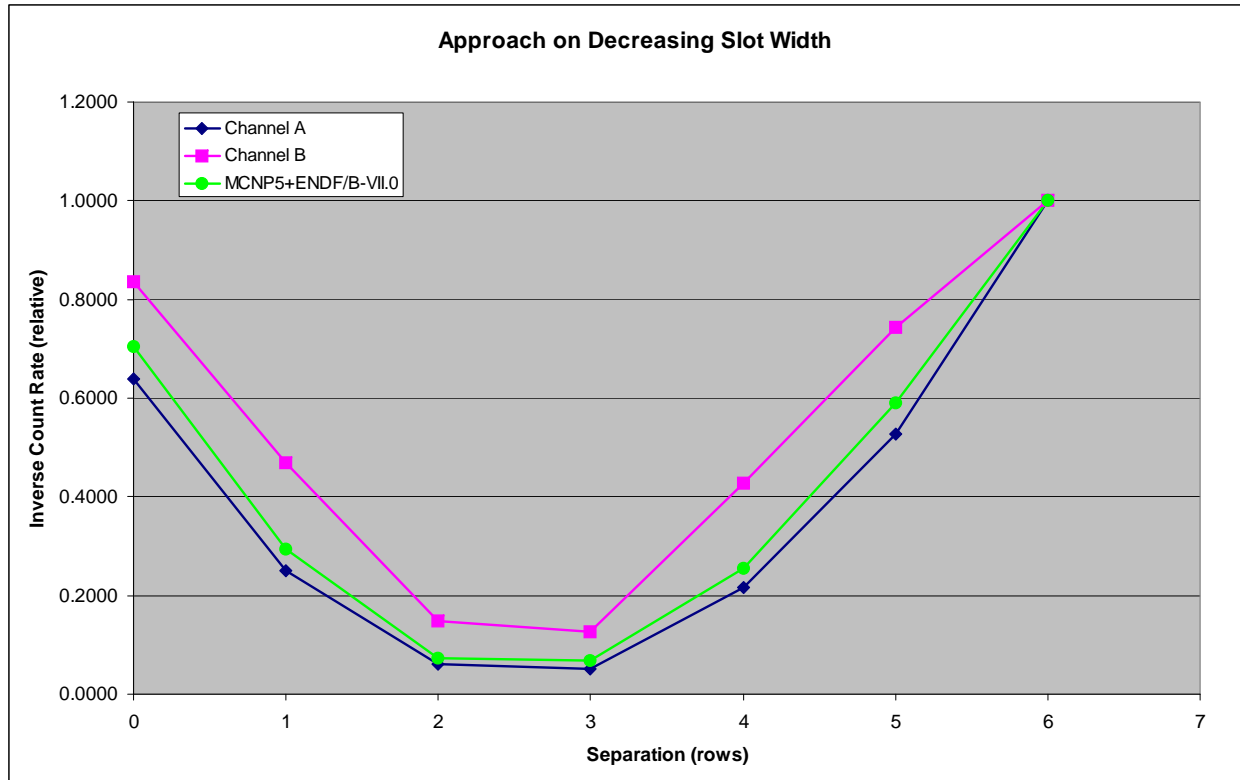
8/18/2011 Fuel Separation

This experiment demonstrates the trade-off between increasing interaction between the core halves as they come together and decreasing moderation as the water is squeezed from between the core halves.





8/18/2011 Approach on Fuel Separation

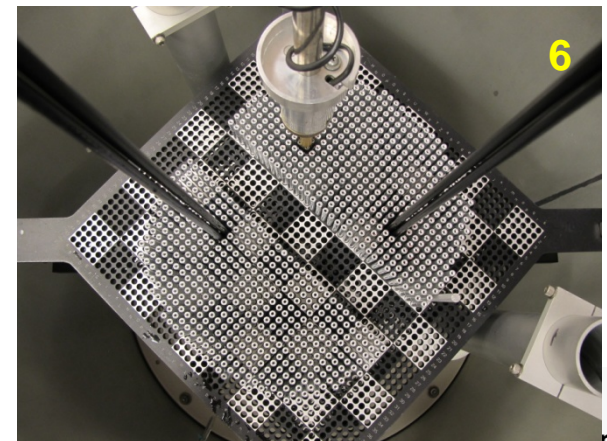
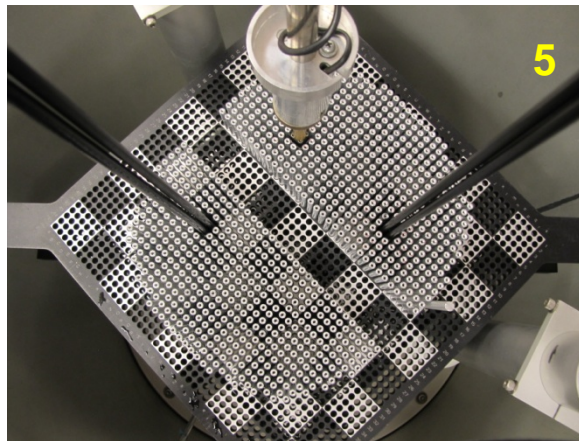
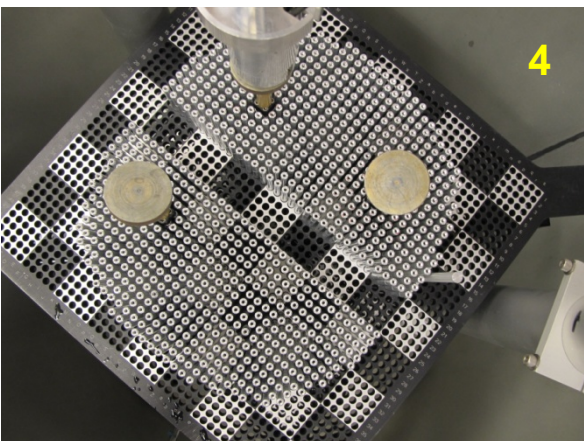
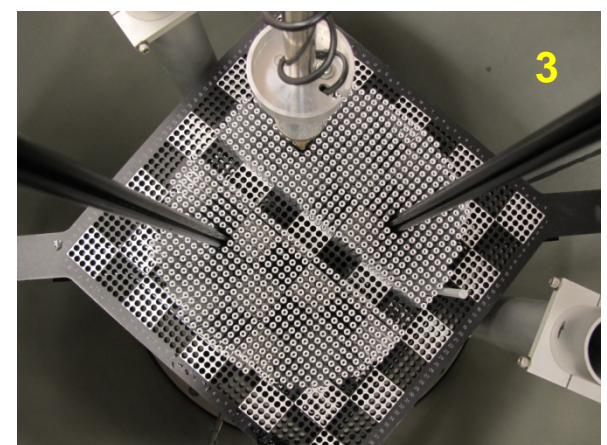
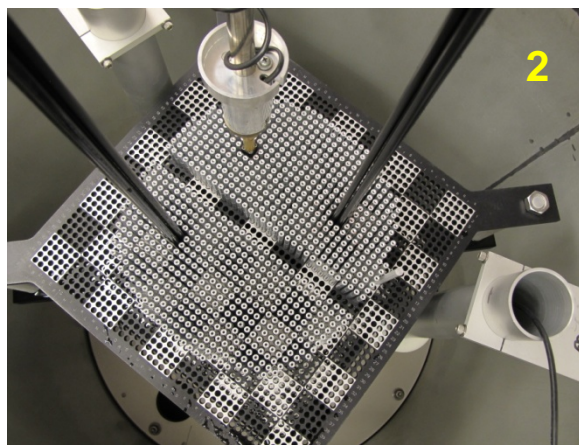
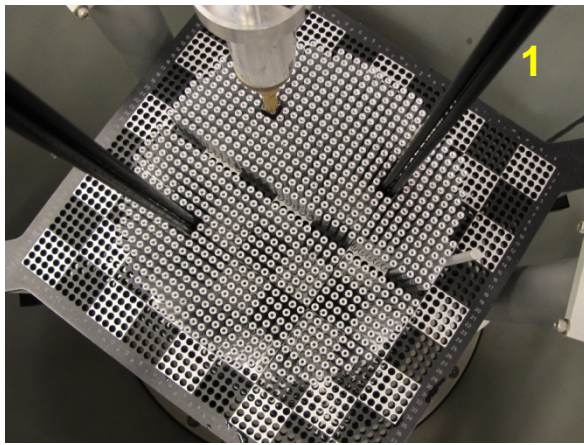
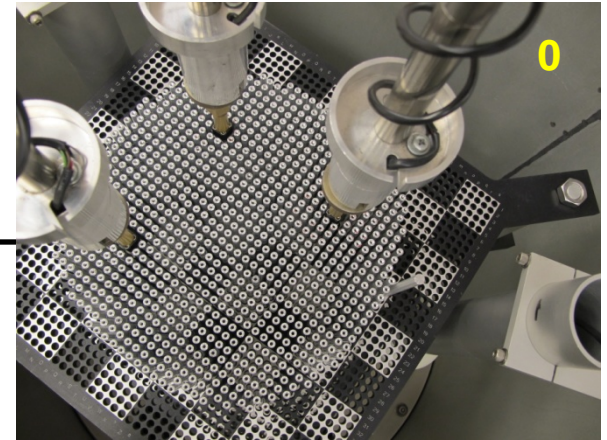


Rows	Holes	Count Rate		Inverse Count Rate		Channel A		Channel B	
		Ch. A	Ch. B	Ch. A	Ch. B	Projected	Next	Projected	Next
6	198	17957	45453	1.0000	1.0000				
5	165	34035	61171	0.5276	0.7430	3.88	4.44	2.11	3.55
4	132	82682	106178	0.2172	0.4281	3.30	3.65	2.64	3.32
3	99	346693	360622	0.0518	0.1260	2.69	2.84	2.58	2.79
2	66	290713	305421	0.0618	0.1488	8.19	5.10	8.53	5.27
1	33	71572	96942	0.2509	0.4689	2.33	1.66	2.46	1.73
0	0	28105	54327	0.6389	0.8367	1.65	0.82	2.27	1.14



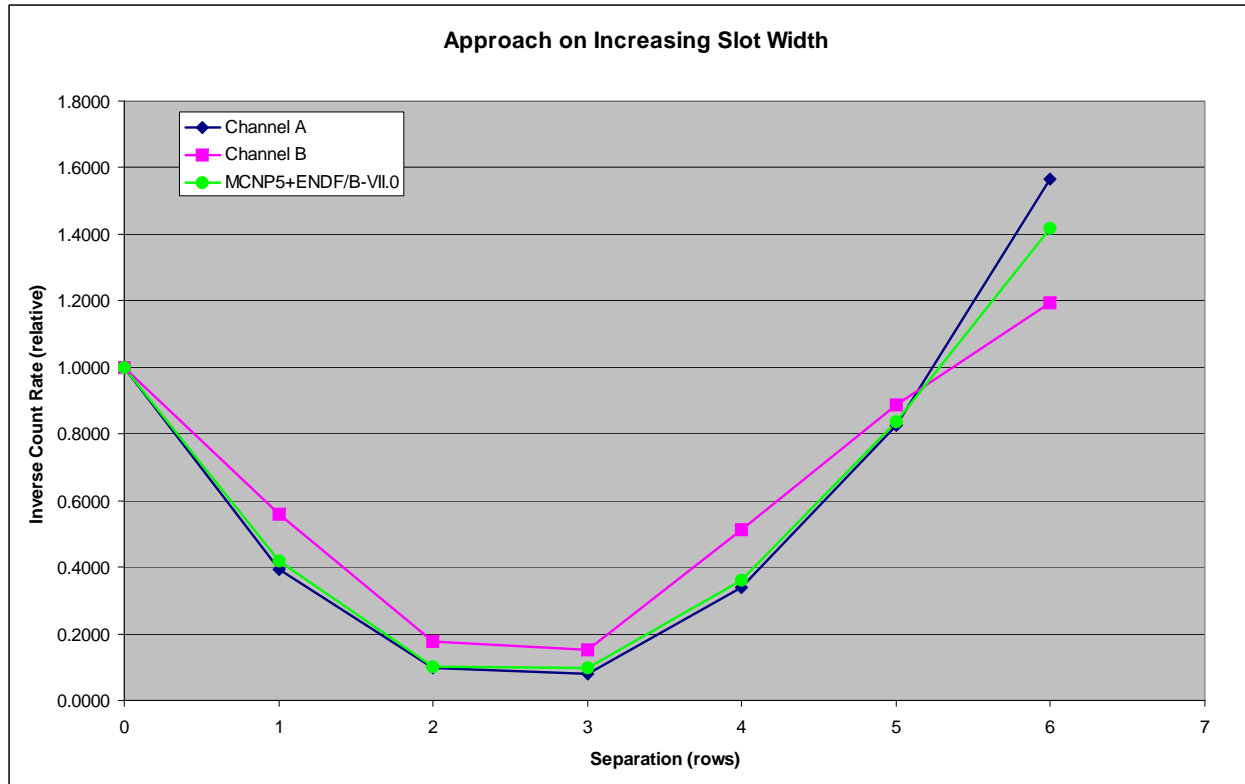
8/18/2011 Fuel Separation (2)

The reverse order demonstrates increasing moderation first and the decrease in reactivity as the core halves move “to far” apart.





8/18/2011 Approach on Fuel Separation (2)



Rows	Holes	Count Rate		Inverse Count Rate		Channel A		Channel B	
		Ch. A	Ch. B	Ch. A	Ch. B	Projected	Next	Projected	Next
0	0	28105	54327	1.0000	1.0000				
1	33	71572	96942	0.3927	0.5604	1.65	1.32	2.27	1.64
2	66	290713	305421	0.0967	0.1779	2.33	2.16	2.46	2.23
3	99	346693	360622	0.0811	0.1506	8.19	5.60	8.53	5.77
4	132	82682	106178	0.3399	0.5117	2.69	3.34	2.58	3.29
5	165	34035	61171	0.8258	0.8881	3.30	4.15	2.64	3.82
6	198	17957	45453	1.5651	1.1952	3.88	4.94	2.11	4.05



Experiment 4

Interior Fuel Rod Removal

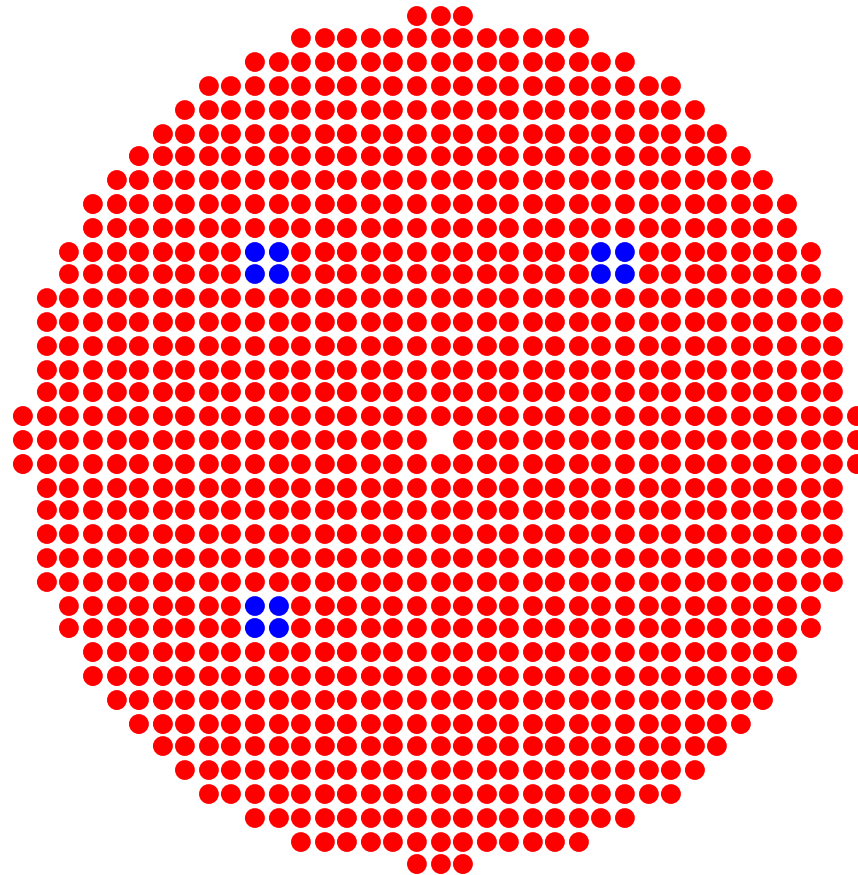


Experiment 4 Overview

- **We determine the effect of removing fuel rods from the interior of the fuel array**
- **We are actually replacing fuel rods with water**
- **Criticality safety parameters that are in play:**
 - **Mass**
 - **Moderation**
 - **Reflection**
 - **Absorption**
- **Application to criticality safety:**
 - **What happens to a compact array of fuel lumps if the array becomes more spread out?**



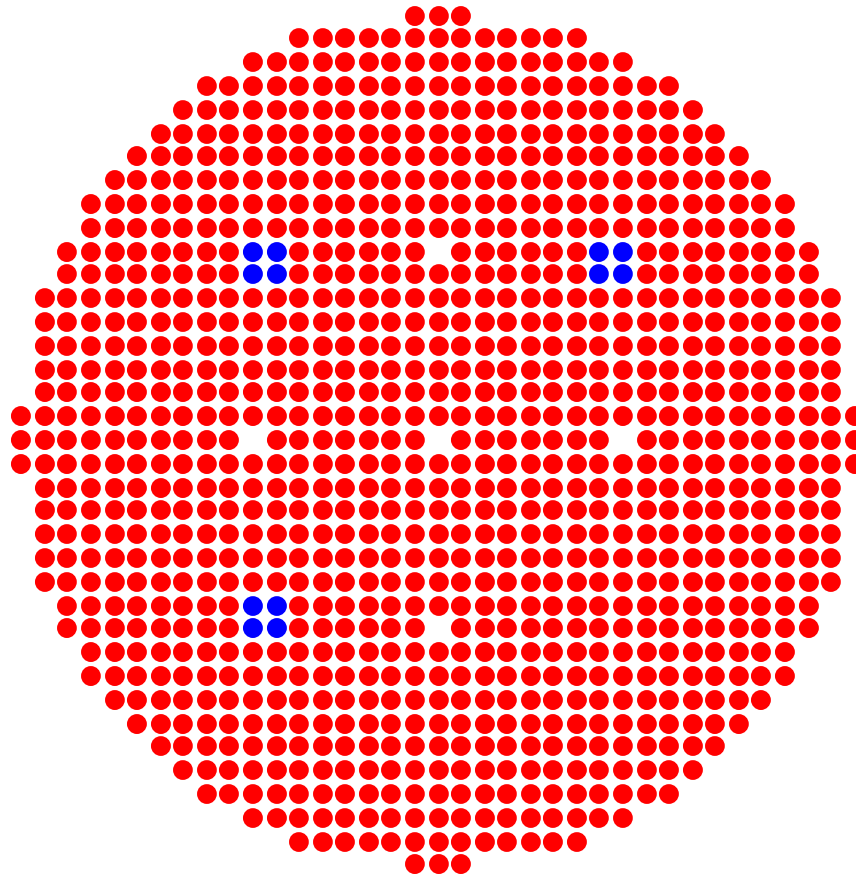
Fuel Replacement with Water Configuration 0



1032 Fuel Rods
0 Water Holes (the source doesn't count)



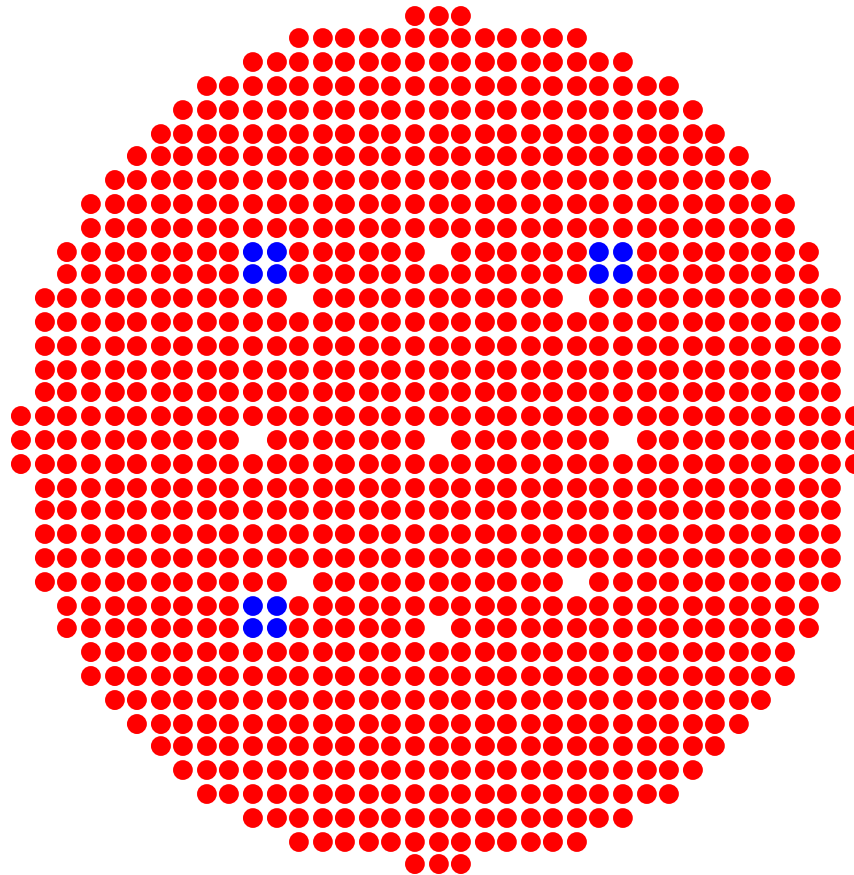
Fuel Replacement with Water Configuration 1



1028 Fuel Rods
4 Water Holes



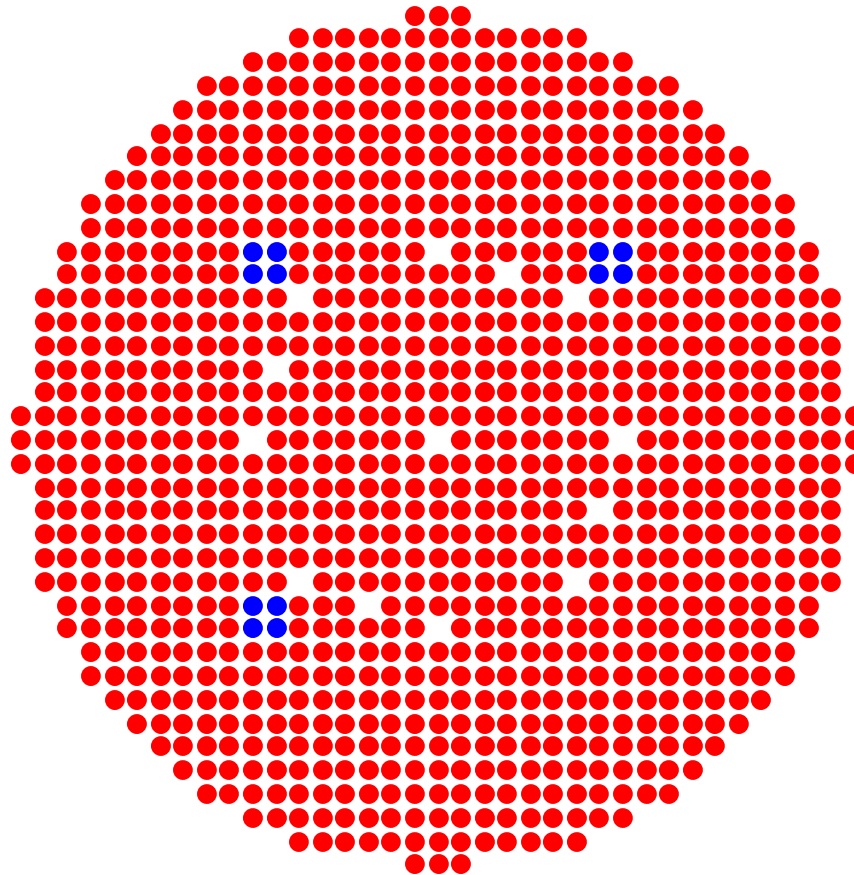
Fuel Replacement with Water Configuration 2



1024 Fuel Rods
8 Water Holes



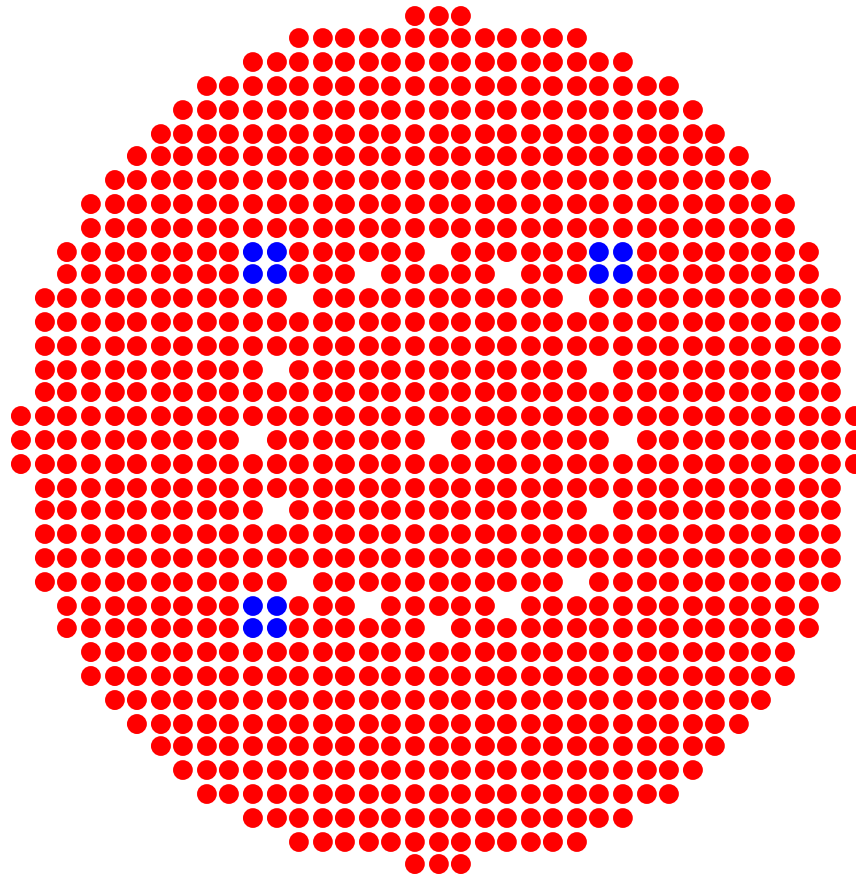
Fuel Replacement with Water Configuration 3



1020 Fuel Rods
12 Water Holes



Fuel Replacement with Water Configuration 4



1016 Fuel Rods
16 Water Holes



Mechanics of the Experiment

- The number of interior fuel rods replaced by water is increased
- We monitor the count rates
- The class takes the fuel rods from the operations staff and places them on the fuel table
- Each increment is four rods

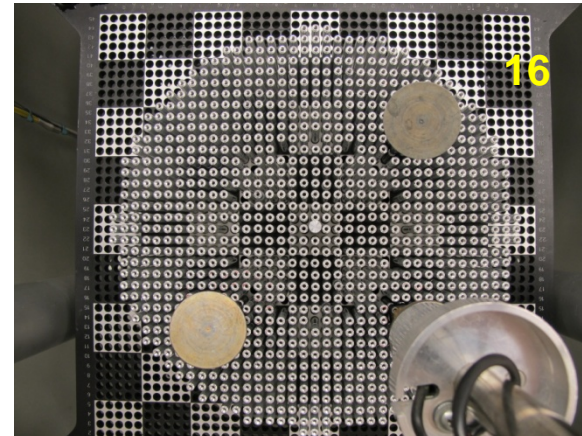
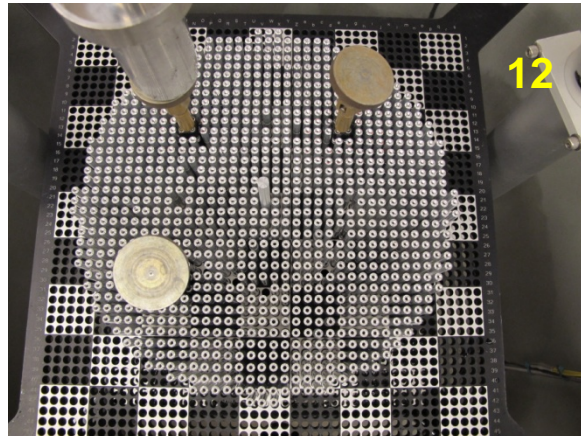
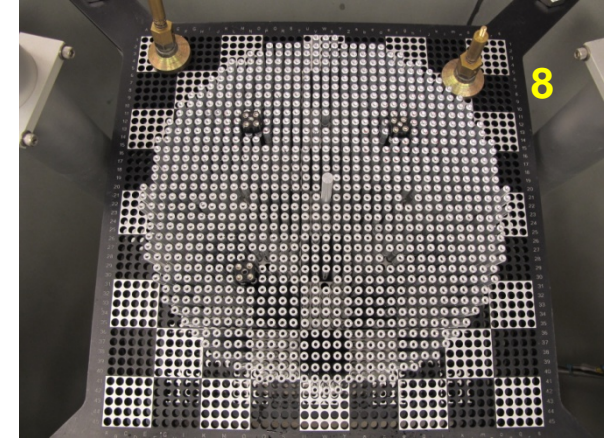
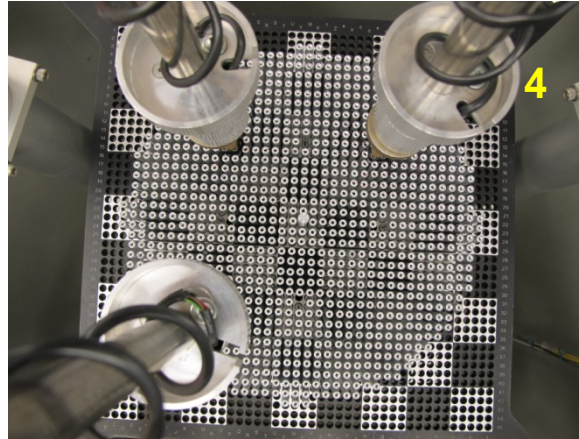
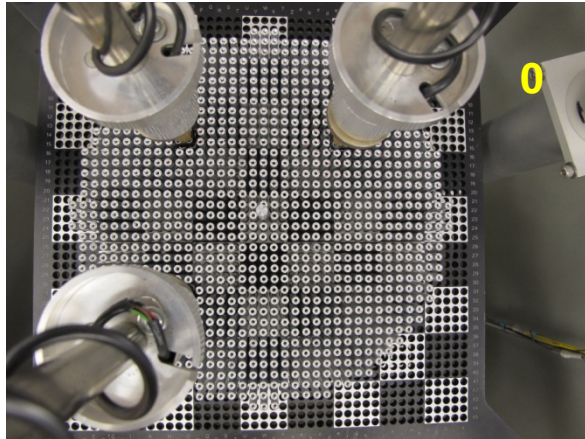


The Experiment Process

- The desired fuel rod array is loaded
- The safety rods are “cocked”
- The reactor room is cleared
- The core tank is filled with water
- The control rod is raised – this puts the assembly in its most reactive condition in this operational mode
- Counts are taken
- The core tank is drained
- The control rod is lowered
- The safety rods are dropped
- We do projections to DC as before
- The reactor room is opened
- Loop back to the first step on this page

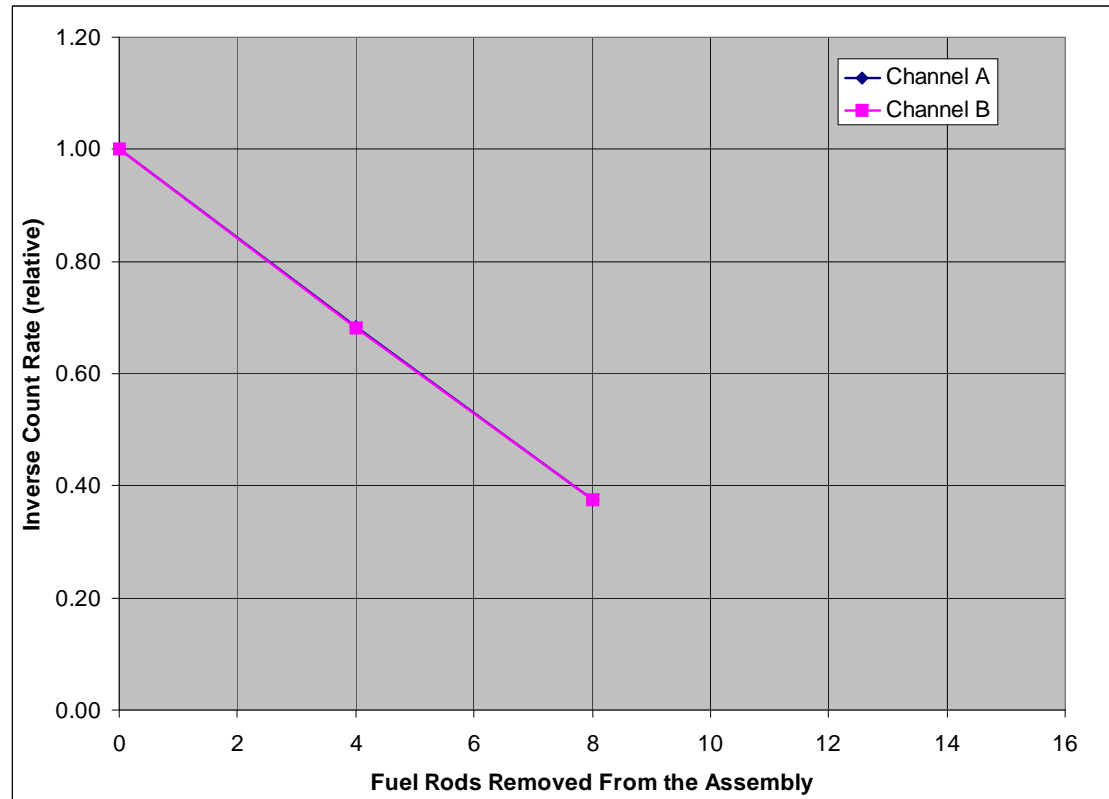


8/19/2011 Approach on Water Holes





8/19/2011 Approach on Water Holes



Rods	Count Rate		Inverse Multiplication		Channel A		Channel B	
	Ch. A	Ch. B	Ch. A	Ch. B	Projected	Next	Projected	Next
0	73697	69113	1.0000	1.0000				
4	107895	101371	0.6830	0.6818	12.62	8.31	12.57	8.29
8	196099	184739	0.3758	0.3741	12.89	10.45	12.86	10.43



Questions?



Attendees of the Pilot Offering of the Sandia Hands-On Criticality Safety Training Class and Sandia Staff