

The Department of the Air Force is piloting the development of a nuclear micro-reactor to provide reliable, safe, and clean energy to installations. The pilot will help determine the technology's viability for future energy resilience initiatives for mission assurance.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Some micro-reactors
are small enough
to be transported
by truck!

Updated as of March 2023

Micro-Reactor Pilot

Why it Matters

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is building energy resilience capabilities as a key enabler of mission success at its installations. Concurrently, the Department of Defense (DoD) is actively working to mitigate risks posed by climate change, and seeking energy sources that are reliable, resilient, and clean.

To that end, the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required the Secretary of Energy to report on a pilot program to provide resilience for DoD facilities by contracting with a commercial entity to build and operate at least one licensed micro-reactor by December 31, 2027. Building on this, Executive Order 13972, "Promoting Small Modular Reactors for National Defense and Space Exploration" outlined requirements for micro-reactor development specifically within the DoD.

What's a Micro-Reactor?

Micro-reactors are a simple and compact form of nuclear reactor capable of producing between 1-20 megawatts (MW) of carbon free electricity. Micro-reactors have high energy output, a small footprint, and can operate independently from the grid.

Micro-reactors are not defined by their fuel type and come in a variety of designs that can safely produce both power and heat for long intervals between refueling. They are equipped with safety features that allow them to self-adjust during operation to prevent conditions that could lead to overheating. Their simple and responsive design reduces the number of specialized operators required.



Figure 1. Micro-reactors have many benefits, and are known for their simple, fail-safe, and self adjusting designs. They have the potential to serve as redundant sources of power for DAF installations, enhancing mission assurance through energy assurance. Image credit: U.S. Department of Energy.



“Micro-reactors are a promising technology for ensuring energy resilience and reliability, and are particularly well-suited for powering and heating remote domestic military bases like Eielson AFB.” - SAF/IEE Former Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Correll



The Micro-Reactor Pilot Project

To facilitate the micro-reactor pilot program, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Environment, Safety, and Infrastructure (SAF/IEE) is working with the Air Force Office of Energy Assurance, the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment & Energy Resilience, the Department of Energy, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In October 2021, the DAF announced Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) as the preferred location to pilot its first micro-reactor. The installation was determined to be the preferred location for the pilot due to the existing infrastructure, suitable climate, and critical mission resilience requirement.

Once completed, the first of its kind micro-reactor pilot project is expected to produce energy to supplement current installation energy sources as a redundant resilience measure, which will help ensure mission critical infrastructure is protected against physical and cyber security threats.

Pilot Execution Timeline

In September 2022, the Department of the Air Force, in partnership with the Defense Logistics Agency Energy, released a request for proposal (RFP) for the project. The power purchase agreement request for proposal (RFP) closed on January 31, 2023.

DAF plans to select a vendor and release the Notice of Intent to Award in 2023. Permitting and licensing activities, including the National Environmental Policy Act assessment are expected to begin by 2025. Micro-reactor demonstration and operational testing is targeted to begin in 2027.*

**The proposed timeline is tentative and subject to change*

For More Information:

Contact SAF.IEE.Micro-ReactorPilot@us.af.mil

Pilot project updates will be shared on <https://www.eielson.af.mil/microreactor/>

The Department of the Air Force Installation Energy Program is committed to developing and deploying policies and guidance to ensure the enterprise is prepared to deliver energy and water whenever and wherever it is needed.

For more information:

 safie.hq.af.mil/InstallationEnergy

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