

State Officials Explore Advanced Nuclear Research and Deployment in Tennessee

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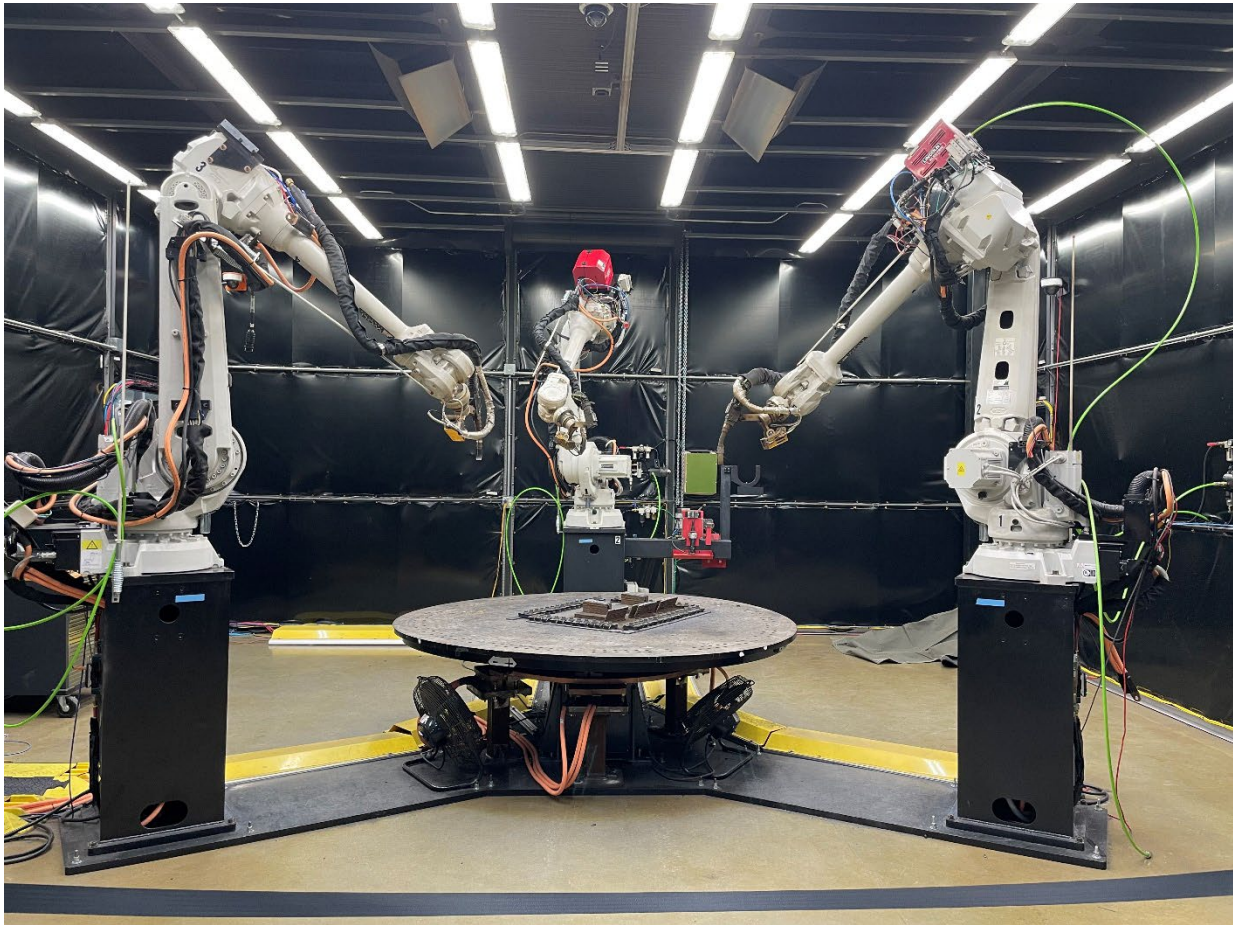
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State public utility commissions and commission staff, governors' energy advisors, and State Energy Office staff toured nuclear research facilities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory on April 25, 2024. Photo courtesy of Commissioner Floyd B. McKissick Jr., North Carolina Utilities Commission.

NARUC, the National Association of State Energy Officials, and the National Governors Association hosted a joint site visit and workshop in Knoxville, Tennessee, from April 24 to 26. Approximately 50 members from all three organizations, representing 28 states, convened to tour nuclear research facilities at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and participate in advanced nuclear discussions with subject-matter experts and local leaders. The event was made possible by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Nuclear Energy's cooperative agreements that fund nuclear technical assistance resources at NARUC, NASEO, and NGA.

On April 24, state members toured the Manufacturing Demonstration Facility at ORNL. The MDF focuses on improving the competitiveness of American manufacturing, offering unique advanced manufacturing capabilities to U.S. companies involved in various facets of the clean energy supply chain. State members viewed several projects ranging from enhancing the performance of wind turbine blades to developing a multi-robot additive manufacturing system to take a major step forward in 3D printing.



State members viewed MedUSA, a large-scale hybrid additive manufacturing platform at ORNL's Manufacturing Demonstration Facility. Photo courtesy of Kiera Zitelman, technical director, NARUC CPI.

On April 25, members were welcomed to Knoxville by Michael Hendrix of Tennessee Governor Bill Lee's office and Commissioner Robin Morrison of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission. Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Office of Energy Programs Director Molly Cripps moderated a panel featuring leaders from the East Tennessee Economic Council, University of Tennessee Knoxville, and Anderson County highlighting how the region has capitalized on its infrastructure, workforce, national laboratory campus, and educational institutions to attract public and private investments in advanced nuclear. State members from Texas, Connecticut, West Virginia, and Kentucky shared updates on nuclear deployment in their states moderated by Commissioner Floyd B. McKissick, Jr. of the North Carolina Utilities Commission.

The group then traveled to ORNL to tour the High Flux Isotope Reactor, Nuclear Fuel Development Section, Spent Nuclear Fuel Characterization, and Liquid Salt Test Loop.

These facilities support the advanced nuclear supply chain by developing and testing cutting-edge fuels for existing and advanced reactors. Although only a small slice of ORNL's 10,000-acre campus, these four tours enhanced state members' understanding of advanced nuclear research, development, demonstration, and deployment challenges and breakthroughs, as well as the importance of DOE funding and partnerships between industry and the National Laboratories.

On the final day of the event, state members participated in a facilitated feedback session on a forthcoming NARUC-NASEO resource focused on supporting states in developing strategic frameworks around advanced nuclear generation. Senior officials from the Tennessee Valley Authority, Kairos Power, X-energy, and Centrus provided comments on the economic development and workforce potential of advanced nuclear in Tennessee and around the U.S., moderated by Utah Office of Energy Development Deputy Director Harry Hansen. And to conclude, Philip Ehrig, grants manager, Investments and Infrastructure for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, moderated a panel on federal resources and incentives for coal-to-nuclear repowering featuring representatives from DOE's Office of Policy and Gateway for Accelerated Innovation in Nuclear.

To learn more about the DOE-NARUC Nuclear Energy Partnership, please visit <https://www.naruc.org/core-sectors/electricity-energy/nuclear-energy/>.