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Media release

25 year anniversary of Nagra's Grimsel Test Site

25 years of research and development in the Swiss Alps

Today Nagra celebrates 25 years of the operation of the Grimsel Test Site. The festivities will include over 100 invited guests, including government officials, national, cantonal and local politicians, members of the media and the industry, as well as representatives from the national and international partners.

25 years ago, Nagra inaugurated the Grimsel Test Site (GTS), an underground rock laboratory in the Swiss Alps. The GTS has evolved into an important research center for both the Swiss program and the international partners in the field of deep geological disposal of radioactive waste. Dozens of significant experiments have been carried out since the opening of the rock laboratory. The results have been incorporated directly into Nagra's engineering feasibility studies on options for realisation of geological repositories in Switzerland and continue to contribute significantly to the studies for the optimisation of deep geologic disposal.

Currently, 25 organisations and research institutes from 11 different countries as well as the European Union are participating in the various projects. Particular importance is also attached to the close and fruitful cooperation with Swiss universities (e.g. the University of Bern and the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich). Some of the projects are jointly financed by the EU and the Swiss Federal Office for Education and Science. The GTS activities are supported by the local communities of Guttannen, Innertkirchen and Meiringen and numerous local businesses – all of which have in their own way contributed to the success of the GTS.

The rock laboratory is located at an elevation of 1,730 meters above sea-level, about 400 meters beneath the Juchlistock, in the granite and granodiorite of the Aar Massif that was formed some 300 million years ago. In the more than 1,000 m long research tunnels so far a total of almost 5,000 meters of cored boreholes have been excavated. The site is accessible for the researchers year round, during the winter months by means of the KWO cable car. The GTS is open to visitors from the beginning of June until the end of October. Please see www.grimsel.com for further information.

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More information about the research program can be found at www.grimsel.com.

According to Swiss nuclear energy legislation, the producers of radioactive waste are responsible for its safe management and disposal. In 1972, the Federal Government and the nuclear power plant operators set up the National Cooperative for the Disposal of Radioactive Waste (Nagra) to perform this task. Nagra, which has its headquarters in Wettingen (AG), is the national technical competence centre in the field of deep geological disposal of radioactive waste.

Out of a strong sense of responsibility for the long-term protection of man and the environment, 80 employees are involved daily in performing this important work. The high level of competence is secured by targeted research programmes in two Swiss underground rock laboratories and intensive international collaboration.