

GLOBEANDMAIL.COM

What a charge!

Scientists say Nevada experiment generated a current equal to four times all the electrical power on Earth

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2005
UPDATED AT 12:16 AM EDT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Las Vegas — Scientists at the Nevada Test Site said they generated a current Wednesday equal to roughly four times all the electrical power on Earth.

The current, which created pressures in materials millions of times greater than normal, was part of an experiment to better understand nuclear weapons.

The experiment was conducted at the test site's Atlas Pulsed Power Facility by scientists from Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, along with staff from the test site and contractor Bechtel Nevada.

During the few millionths of a second that it operated, the 590-tonne Atlas pulsed-power generator discharged nearly 19 million amps of current through an aluminum cylindrical shell about the size of a tuna can, the National Nuclear Security Administration said.

Atlas, which works as a giant power multiplier, was designed as part of a U.S. Energy Department program to determine the readiness of the United States' nuclear stockpile without underground testing.

It was built at Los Alamos and recently moved to the Nevada Test Site, a proving ground just north of Las Vegas.

© Copyright 2005 Bell Globemedia Publishing Inc. All Rights Reserved.