

UO physicists use neutron beam to find explosives

Dannie Helm

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Two University physicists are conducting tests to see if a beam of neutrons, generated by a particle accelerator, can be used to detect explosives in airport luggage.

The testing involves the use of small quantities of extremely stable explosives, such as the plastic explosive C-4, on campus. The tests began on Tuesday and are expected to continue until June 27.

The Federal Aviation Administration, which is funding the research of professors Harlan Lefevre and Jack Overley, has an explosives expert working with the physicists. He is the only one authorized to handle the explosives while they are on campus.

The Eugene Police Department's Explosives Response Unit was contracted to transport the explosives to and from the police storage bunker at Short Mountain Landfill in a specially equipped explosives disposal vehicle on a daily basis. The explosives will remain police property while the testing is over.

The explosive materials are only present during the day and are stored in a special explosive containment box located in the basement of the Volcanology Building, where the tests are being conducted. Access to the accelerator lab is restricted to authorized personnel at all times, and the Eugene Fire Marshal's office is inspecting the operation for security and safety.

Tom Hicks, associate director of the University Office of Public Safety, said he feels confident that there is very little risk associated with the testing and the presence of limited quantities of plastic explosives on campus.

"These are extremely stable explosives which can't be set off by electrical fields, and are designed to be shot at and not explode," Hicks said, adding that there are no fuses or detonators present. Additionally, safety notices have been posted around the Volcanology Building. "We realize that some may be concerned about the testing and we encourage supervisors to show some latitude in accommodating those workers," Hicks said in a news release.

The neutron beam is one of several search methods the FAA is exploring to find an alternative to the time-consuming and invasive manual search techniques used currently. Such searches are necessary because plastic explosives do not show up on X-rays or trigger standard metal detectors.

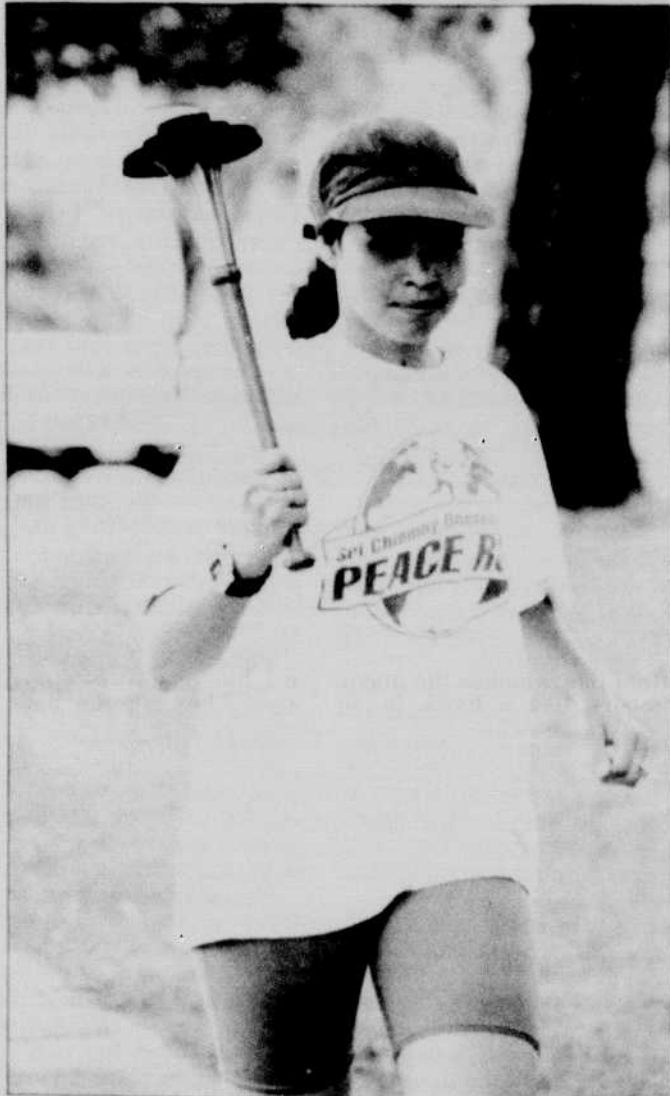
The neutron beam acts similarly to X-rays, producing shadowy images of the various materials inside luggage, but unlike an X-ray, the neutron beam may be able to detect the presence of plastic explosives.

The accelerator being used is unusual in that it has been in continuous operation since 1965, one of only a few in use for such an extended period of time. During its operation, the accelerator has primarily been used for basic research in nuclear physics, as well as some limited research into applied physics, such as the testing currently being conducted.

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'All we are saying...'



MARK MCTYRE/Emerald

Holding a flaming Peace Torch, a runner in the 50-state, 11,000-mile U.S. Peace Run jogs along Franklin Boulevard at midday Wednesday. The run is part of the 70-nation Sri Chimnoy One-ness-Home Peace Run, held every other year since 1987.

Videotapes explain sex harassment to teachers

McMINNVILLE (AP) — Videotapes explaining sexual harassment will be shown this year to administrators and teachers in the Yamhill Education Service District in an effort to raise awareness.

Schools across the nation have been sued by teachers who claim they were sexually harassed by co-workers and by students who claim they were harassed by teachers or other students, said Mary Kerns, district superintendent.

The videotapes, which will be used as part of the district's training program, are an attempt to avoid such problems, she said.

Sexual harassment isn't a big problem at McMinnville High School, but it does exist, Principal Tom Chapman said.

"I believe that it goes on, and I believe it affects people and the way they interact with others," he said.

One of the things that needs changing, he said, is the way some boys interact with girls.

"I think girls should be able to walk down the halls without hearing remarks from others about their physical attributes," he said.

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