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"During Inspection of Fuel Elements---SRE---
Parted Fuel Element..."

FOR RELEASE-Saturday A. M. August 29, 1959

AI-40

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Wired Copy to Ray Schacht and Em Jones

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ATOMICS INTERNATIONAL

A Division of North American Aviation, Inc.

P.O. Box 309, Canoga Park, California
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CANOGA PARK, CALIF.-- During inspection of fuel elements on July 26 at the Sodium Reactor Experiment, operated for the Atomic Energy Commission at Santa Susana, California by Atomics International, a division of North American Aviation, Inc., a parted fuel element was observed.

The fuel element damage is not an indication of unsafe reactor conditions. No release of radioactive materials to the plant or its environs occurred and operating personnel were not exposed to harmful conditions.

The occurrence is of importance from a technical standpoint and a detailed study is underway to determine the precise cause of the damage.

The fuel element of the SRE is a cluster of seven stainless steel tubes, each approximately 3/4 inches in diameter and 6 feet long. Each tube contains a column of six-inch long uranium metal slugs. These tubes are capped at the two ends. The elements are suspended in the core of the reactor by means of hanger rods from plug in the upper shield.

To date, 34 of the 43 elements comprising the fuel loading of the core have been examined by means of the fuel handling cask television system. Six elements have only an upper portion of the element attached to the hanger rod. In each case, all seven tubes of the fuel element cluster were parted and a portion of the lower end of the fuel element remained in the core. This fuel loading, nearing the end of its useful life, was scheduled to be removed in the near future.

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