

Energy Resources of Australia uranium output reaches record high in 2005

This would put reprocessing back a bit.

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Uranium miner Energy Resources of Australia Ltd, 68.39 pct owned by Rio Tinto, said drummed uranium oxide output from its Ranger mine in Australia's Northern Territory, rose to a record 5,910 metric tons in calendar 2005 from 5,137 tons in 2004.

The single mine company said final quarter output rose to 1,606 tons from 1,408 tons largely in response to higher sales commitments and improved plant availability.

ERA exports uranium oxide to fuel nuclear electricity utilities in Asia, Europe and North America, providing 11 pct of the world's uranium needs.

The company said it is spending 3.2 mln aud on appraisal drilling on the eastern vicinity of Ranger's current operating pit to determine the ultimate size of Ranger and to test whether there is any possible extension of the ore body.

It said airborne geophysical surveys, conducted during the quarter, highlighted further opportunities that are in the very early stages of assessment.

ERA said these opportunities will be considered for further exploration drilling in 2006.

In October, ERA recalculated its reserves estimate for Ranger to reflect higher than expected long-term uranium prices.

The estimate increased total reserves by 6,285 tons of contained uranium oxide, adding 3 years to Ranger's life. Milling had previously been expected to end in 2011