

## **Nuke test laser flickers into life**

*Good theoretical and practical work keeps science alive but it has little to do with practical energy supply.*

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The world's most powerful laser has taken its first steps towards generating fusion. The National Ignition Facility under construction at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California will focus 192 laser beams on a rice-grain-sized capsule containing the hydrogen isotopes deuterium and tritium when it is completed in 2009.

Its goal is to recreate the temperatures and pressures that occur during a nuclear explosion so that scientists can study nuclear weapons without setting them off for real. In a trial run, four lasers successfully blasted a dummy capsule, delivering 1 per cent of the eventual 500-terawatt capability.