

It was recently announced that, following the radical US Federal Government reorganization plans, the whole Atomic Spectroscopy Group at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will be laid off in a few weeks.

A petition [1] is created trying to revert this disastrous decision.

A dedicated website [2] will have more information soon. In the meantime, please sign this petition and help spread the word among your colleagues.

[1] <https://chnng.it/4mSYg9nsC5>

[2] <https://oppose-the-layoff-of-the-nist-atomic-spectroscopy-group> "

"Dear colleagues,

Over the last 120 years, atomic and plasma spectroscopy was one of the most successful and visible directions of research at NIST. As a matter of fact, the very first scientific paper from the National Bureau of Standards (original NIST's name) back in 1904 was on spectra of mixed gases. Since then, the critically evaluated datasets and databases provided unique benchmarks to researchers across numerous fields of science and industry -- astronomy and astrophysics, medicine and Martian geology, lithography and nonproliferation. The advanced collisional-radiative codes allowed fast and accurate calculations of light emission from the hot matter of magnetic and inertial confinement fusion, laser-produced plasmas, solar corona, industrial plasmas. The precise measurements of spectra from neutral atoms to extremely charged ions helped discover many new exoplanets, accurately measure nuclear radii, develop new powerful diagnostic techniques. Unfortunately, the story of atomic spectroscopy at NIST is coming to an end.

We were recently informed that unless there is a major change in the Federal Government reorganization plans, the whole Atomic Spectroscopy Group will be laid off in a few weeks, in particular, since our work is not considered to be statutorily essential for the NIST mission. In anticipation of this likely outcome, our primary goal at this moment is to preserve as much of the accumulated scientific knowledge as possible. We are currently discussing mirroring our atomic spectroscopy databases and online tools at other institutions and/or universities so that they will not become a slowly dying burden but rather continue to evolve and improve. Some of the unique laboratory equipment and spectroscopic instruments may be loaned and thus saved as well. An exceptional collection of photographic plates with many still unexplored spectra will hopefully find a new home, too.

Obviously, the most painful side of this development is the layoff of our extraordinary scientific and technical staff. Some of us plan to retire, others will hit the job market. Regardless of future developments, it is more than clear that the continuity and quality of the atomic spectroscopy research in the country will suffer tremendously.

With that said, we thank you all for collaboration, support, and encouragement over many years. It was our honor and privilege to work with you.

Yuri Ralchenko

Alexander Kramida

Joseph N. Tan

Karen Olsen"