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Investigation of the ${}^7\text{Li}(p,n){}^7\text{Be}$ neutron fields at high energies

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The neutron activation method is well-suited to investigate neutron-capture cross sections relevant for the main s-process component. Neutrons can be produced via the ${}^7\text{Li}(p,n)$ reaction with proton energies of 1912 keV at e.g. Van de Graaf accelerators, which results in a Maxwellian spectrum of neutrons corresponding to a temperature of $k_{\text{B}}T = 25$ keV. This mimicks the s-process scenario in low-mass asymptotic giant branch (AGB) stars. However, the weak s-process takes place in massive stars at temperatures between 25 and 90 keV. Neutron spectra corresponding to a Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution with $k_{\text{B}}T > 25$ keV cannot be produced by the ${}^7\text{Li}(p,n)$ reaction. Simulations using the PINO [1] code suggest that a Maxwellian spectrum for higher energies can be produced by a linear combination of different neutron spectra. The resulting spectrum averaged cross sections can be combined to e.g. $k_{\text{B}}T = 90$ keV Maxwellian Averaged Cross Section (MACS). To validate the PINO code at proton energies $E_p \neq 1912$ keV, measurements were carried out at the PTB Ion Accelerator Facility (PIAF) at the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt in Braunschweig, Germany. The neutron fields were measured using a pulsed proton beam and three ${}^6\text{Li}$ -glass scintillation detectors mounted at different angles. The neutron energy was determined by time-of-flight (TOF).

[1] R. Reifarh et. al., Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research A 608, 139 (2009)

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