

NISTory of the Periodic Table



Deuterium

This rare heavy isotope of hydrogen was distilled from liquid hydrogen at NIST and identified by Columbia University's Harold Urey (Nobel Prize 1934).

Image Credit: Uwe Arp/NIST



Krypton

The wavelength of light from this atom was used to define the official meter until 1983.

Image Credit: Neil Tucker/Wikimedia



Cesium

The frequency of light absorbed by this atom, measured by atomic clocks such as NIST-F4, has been used to officially define the second since 1967.

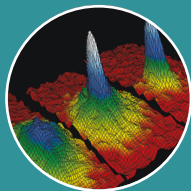
Image Credit: NIST



Sodium

A gas of these atoms was cooled with lasers by NIST scientists to reach temperatures near absolute zero (Nobel Prize 1997).

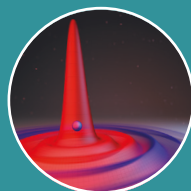
Image Credit: H. Mark Hefner/NIST



Rubidium

Researchers at JILA (NIST-CU Boulder) used these atoms to create a new state of matter called a Bose-Einstein condensate (Nobel Prize 2001).

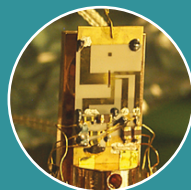
Image Credit: NIST/JILA/CU-Boulder



Potassium

JILA researcher Debbie Jin and her colleagues coaxed pairs of these atoms into forming another new state of matter known as a fermionic condensate.

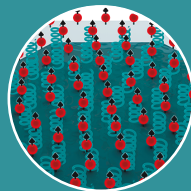
Image Credit: JILA



Aluminum

Electrically charged versions of these atoms (ions) have been used to create "quantum logic" clocks with record accuracy.

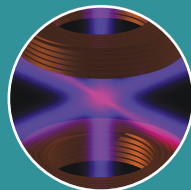
Image Credit: NIST



Beryllium

Ions of these atoms have performed quantum logic operations that could lay groundwork for future quantum computers.

Image Credit: S. Burrows/JILA



Strontium and Ytterbium

NIST and JILA researchers trapped thousands of these atoms in webs of light known as optical lattices to create ultraprecise and stable atomic clocks.

Image Credit: NIST



Charlotte Moore Sitterly

From 1945 to 1985, this NIST astrophysicist published critically reviewed tables of atomic data, establishing the agency as an authoritative source of this information.

Image Credit: NIST