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Implantation of pure Fe-55 into microcalorimeters for activity standardization measurements

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Radionuclide metrology techniques, as currently used for activity standardization, show a large variety of measurement uncertainties –from permille accuracy, e.g., for the α -decaying isotope Am-241 ($T_{1/2} = 432$ a) up to few percent for Fe-55 ($T_{1/2} = 2.73$ a), which decays by electron capture. To reduce such uncertainties, a new standardization technique using direct ion beam implantation of the pure radionuclide into metallic microcalorimeters (MMCs) is explored within the European project PrimA-LTD. The intrinsically high energy resolution of such devices additionally allows for determination of electron capture probabilities with unprecedented accuracy, in this way enables the improvement of theoretical models and correspondingly has a broad impact on radionuclide metrology, nuclear power industry, nuclear medicine and radiopharmacy.

The implantation of 5 Bq of Fe-55 into each minuscule absorber, sized 0.14×0.14 mm², of such MMC detectors was performed at the RISIKO mass separator at Mainz university using resonance ionization mass separation and specific focalization and automated pointing. The technique was chosen due to its outstanding element selectivity and overall implantation efficiency guaranteeing the required implantation purity. A novel two-step ionization scheme for iron was identified and characterized in stable Fe-56, implying efficient second and third harmonic generation of the Ti:Sa laser radiation used at RISIKO. One of different strong auto-ionizing states was used for implantation of the Fe-55. In Fe-56, the analysis of a long series of Rydberg states allows to verify the ionization potential and extend the existing data on even parity Rydberg states in Fe. The spectroscopic results will be discussed as prerequisite for the implantation process.

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