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**Validation of deuterium neutral density measurements in NSTX-U using the Monte Carlo neutral transport code DEGAS 2<sup>1</sup>** FILIPPO SCOTTI, Lawrence Livermore Natl Lab, D.P. STOTLER, R.E. BELL, M.D. BOYER, B.P. LEBLANC, PPPL, S.A. SABBAGH, Columbia U., V.A. SOUKHANOVSII, LLNL — In NSTX-U, deuterium neutral density  $n_D$  profiles are inferred at the outboard midplane from deuterium Balmer- $\alpha$  (D- $\alpha$ ) emission measured with a filtered camera (Edge Neutral Density Diagnostic, ENDD).  $n_D$  measurements obtained from D- $\alpha$  emissivity are validated using the Monte Carlo neutral transport code DEGAS 2. Contributions to emissivity due to electron impact excitation and molecular processes are estimated with DEGAS 2 towards assessing the direct use of ENDD for  $n_D$  estimates. Experimental measurements and DEGAS 2 simulations were compared over a database of L-mode discharges, showing good agreement in D- $\alpha$  emissivity profiles. D- $\alpha$  emissivity generally peaked at larger radii in simulations, while far-SOL emission was under predicted. A scan in far SOL plasma parameters in DEGAS 2 showed that a small increase in  $T_e$ ,  $n_e$  improved the agreement with experimental profiles, pointing to the possible importance of intermittent transport. One-way coupling of DEGAS 2 with UEDGE fluid simulations is underway to study fueling and neutral penetration in NSTX-U discharges.

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