



Abundant, Clean, and Safe

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France gets 70% of its power from one carbon-free source. Sweden 40%. Switzerland 36%. The United States 20%. For those who wish to create a world free of carbon emissions, France is clearly the role model. That source of energy, by the way, is not solar or wind. It's not coal, oil, or natural gas, either. It's nuclear. Nuclear energy is not only cleaner than all other forms of energy. It's also cheaper to create, abundant, and safe. Yes, safe.

So, if the world is going to end in a few years because of global warming due to rising CO₂ levels, why aren't we going all out to produce this abundant, clean, and safe form of energy? Why aren't there dozens of nuclear power plants in development all over the world? Well, we all know the answer, right? Nuclear energy is just too risky... too dangerous.

So, even though we're told we're facing an "existential crisis", which means humans may cease to exist—even though we might all wither away in unbearable heat; or starve because of world-wide droughts; or drown in rising seas; or be killed in Mad Max-style riots, nuclear energy is off the table, because... it's too darn risky. Hmm.

I want to be sure I have this right. The goal is to save humanity. There's a way to save humanity. And we won't take it. Because we're afraid there might be a bad accident... or something. Does that make sense to you? Because it doesn't to me.

But maybe I'm not giving enough weight to the safety argument, so let's take a closer look at that since no one, not even the most radical environmentalist, disputes that nuclear power produces massive amounts of energy cleanly and efficiently. Safety, like everything else, is a matter of context. So, here's some context. 1.4 million people die worldwide every year in traffic accidents, 2.3 million in work-related accidents, 4.2 million from air pollution. Deaths directly related to nuclear power? Under 200—not annually but in the entire history of the nuclear power industry.

But what about those famous nuclear disasters we've all heard so much about? Didn't they poison untold thousands? Three Mile Island in 1979, Chernobyl in 1986, and Fukushima in 2011. Okay, let's deal with each one.

Three Mile Island:

There was an accident at the plant, yes, but the amount of radiation that leaked was no more than one might receive taking a chest x-ray. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission acknowledged as much four weeks after the initial media hysteria died down. "We goofed," the commission told Congress. "There was no danger of any hydrogen explosion." But that didn't grab the

headlines.

Chernobyl:

The accident developed into a catastrophe only because of pitiful safety procedures unique to the Soviet Union. It would never have occurred in the West. Even so, initial reports of radiation leakage turned out to be grossly exaggerated. According to the World Health Organization, “As of mid-2005”—that’s 19 years after the explosion—“fewer than 50 deaths had been directly attributed to radiation from the disaster.”

Fukushima:

In 2011, as a result of an earthquake and tsunami, the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant was destroyed, and nuclear radiation was released. Yet, despite the media hysteria, not one person at the nuclear plant died because of radiation leaks. The deaths that occurred in the area were the result of the tsunami.

Well, what about nuclear waste? Surely that’s terribly harmful. Actually, no. All the nuclear waste ever generated in the US can fit on a single football field stacked less than seventy feet high. It’s easily and safely buried in steel canisters encased in concrete.

All this information is easily available. But the anti-nuclear movement with the help of their media allies have spent a tremendous amount of time and money obscuring the facts. They’re more interested in filing lawsuits against this particular form of clean energy than telling the truth about it. Those endless lawsuits have helped make it prohibitively expensive to build new plants or even to keep older ones running.

Ironically, one of the anti-nuclear groups that now litigates against nuclear energy, the Sierra Club, was once a great proponent. The legendary early leader of the club, Will Siri, saw it as the best chance to preserve wildlife.

“Cheap [nuclear] power in unlimited quantities is one of the chief factors in allowing a large rapidly growing population to preserve wildlands, open space, and land of high scenic value,” he told the club in 1966. He was right then and he’s right now. It would take dozens of wind and solar farms, covering thousands of acres of land, to match the energy a single nuclear power plant could produce. From both an environmental and clean energy point of view, there’s no contest.

If you want to save the planet, then you want to go nuclear. If you want to save the planet and you don’t want to go nuclear, then you’re just full of hot air.

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