

Nuclear Energy

By Daniel Fairclough

As its name implies, the word “nuclear” has to do with the nucleus of an atom. **Nuclear energy** comes from the **fusion**, or joining together, of two elements: helium (that gas that makes your voice sound funny) and hydrogen (also found in water).

The main element in nuclear energy is uranium. **Uranium** can be found in coal, sea water and even granite. Granite is a type of rock that you see in gravel or in stone walls.

When the atoms in nuclear materials are very close, they can generate too much heat and explode. That’s why nuclear energy has been used in making bombs. On another front, nuclear energy can pose a threat to the environment. The **fuel rods** that power nuclear power plants only last 2 to 3 years. Then, they are replaced with new rods. But used fuel rods will continue to emit radiation for hundreds of years, so they must be disposed of somewhere. They will contaminate their surroundings if not properly thrown away and sealed.



Even when nuclear energy is carefully controlled, it is not completely safe. Workers who work with uranium or other nuclear materials must wear highly protective suits. People who mine uranium from the ground may suffer health risks.

Many people are in favor of using more nuclear energy, but there is also a lot of concern about the hazards of this energy’s byproducts.