

URANIUM - FAQ

What is uranium?

Uranium is the tenth most abundant element in the earth's crust and the heaviest of the naturally occurring elements (hydrogen is the lightest.)

Why is the price of uranium increasing?

A large supply deficit (60 million pounds annually), high oil prices and a dramatic increase in nuclear power plant construction worldwide are pushing uranium prices higher.

How does uranium generate nuclear power?

Actually, steam turbines generate the electricity. Nuclear fission from uranium atoms generates the heat to create the steam. The process is much like a coal-fired steam power plant, except that uranium fission generates the heat instead of burning coal.

What are the benefits of nuclear power?

One kilogram of natural uranium will yield 20,000 times as much energy as the same amount of coal, yet nuclear power produces no greenhouse gases or acid rain.

What about waste?

A 1000 MWe nuclear reactor produces 27 tonnes of spent fuel, of which 97% is recycled and 3% is hazardous waste. A coal-fired plant of the same capacity produces 7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, 200,000 tonnes of sulphur dioxide and 150,000 to 200,000 tonnes of solid waste.

How much power does uranium produce now?

Uranium produces 16% of the world's energy from 440 operating reactors. France relies on nuclear power for 78% of its energy, Sweden nearly 50%; Japan 25% and the United States 20%.

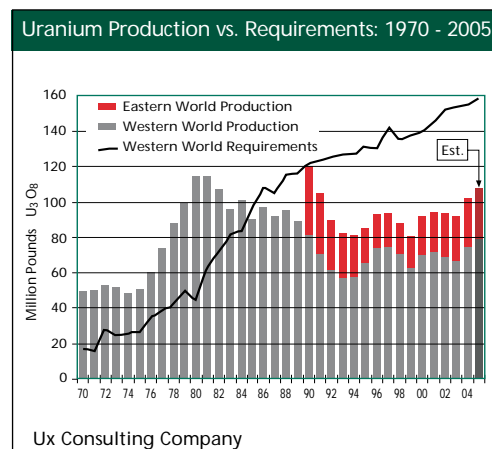
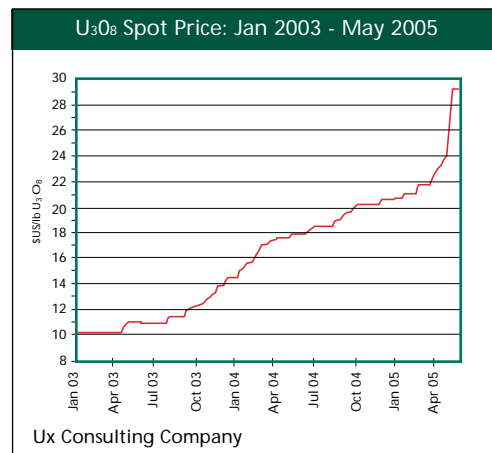
Where does the world get its uranium?

Canada produces about 30% of the world's supply from four mines in Saskatchewan. The next largest producers are Australia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Niger.

Is there enough uranium for world energy needs?

The world's 435 nuclear reactors currently need about 160 million to 180 million pounds of uranium per year, but world uranium production totals only 100 million pounds. Demand will further increase as at least 50 new reactors come on stream in China, Taiwan, Russia, India, Brazil and Eastern Europe. Even with the sharp increase in price, world uranium production is only expected to reach 115 million pounds annually by 2010.

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"Yellowcake" refined uranium ready for use in power generation.

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