



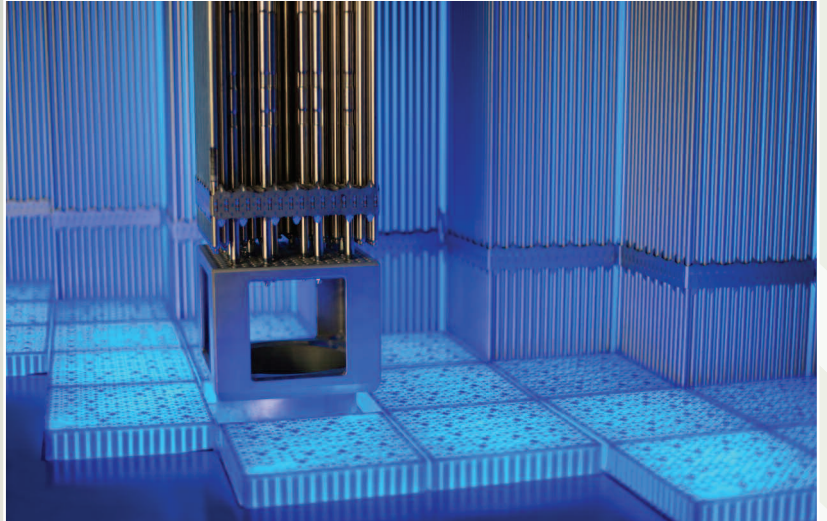
AMERICA'S NUCLEAR SOLUTION

WHAT IS USED NUCLEAR FUEL?

To generate electricity, nuclear power plants use uranium oxide fuel—in the form of small ceramic pellets—that is placed inside metal fuel rods. These rods are grouped into bundles called assemblies. Fission—the splitting of uranium atoms in a chain reaction—produces a tremendous amount of heat energy for the amount of material consumed. This energy is used to boil water into steam, which drives a turbine generator to produce electricity.

A single fuel assembly for a pressurized water reactor (PWR) is approximately 13 feet high and weighs approximately 1,450 pounds. A single fuel assembly for a boiling water reactor (BWR) is approximately 14.5 feet high and weighs approximately 704 pounds. The PWR fuel assembly weighs more because it contains 264 fuel rods, while the BWR fuel assembly contains 63.

Nuclear power plants are shut down every 18 to 24 months and about one-third of the fuel, consisting of the oldest of these fuel assemblies, are removed and replaced. A typical nuclear power plant in a year discharges 20 metric tons of used nuclear fuel.



In the past four decades, the entire industry has produced just a little over 70,000 metric tons of used nuclear fuel. If all the used nuclear fuel produced by the nuclear energy industry in the last 50 years were stacked end to end, it would cover an area the size of a football field 30-feet high.

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