newsworthy trends

Nuclear Power: Meeting America's Energy Needs

(NAPSA)—Here's a question for the energy-conscious: Between 1973 and 1999, what single form of energy was responsible for meeting 40 percent of America's increase in electricity needs?

The answer, surprisingly, is nuclear energy. Over that 24-year period, American nuclear power plants displaced 2.4 billion barrels of oil, 4.1 billion tons of coal and 15.6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

What's not surprising is that nuclear energy is currently experiencing a resurgence in popularity. There are a number of reasons for this phenomenon, including:

• **Environment.** Of all energy sources, nuclear energy has among the lowest impacts on the environment, including water, land, habitat, species and air resources. Also, nuclear power plants produce no controlled air pollutants or greenhouse gases. The use of nuclear energy helps keep the air clean, preserve the Earth's climate, avoids ground-level ozone formation and prevents acid rain.

• **Need.** The Energy Information Administration anticipates that, even with aggressive implementation of energy-efficiency measures, U.S. electricity consumption will increase 1.4 percent each year through 2020. In addition, over the next two decades a number of existing electricity-generating plants will be closed due to age, competitive pressures and as part of our nation's efforts to meet clean air standards. Extending the life of America's nuclear power plants, however, and increasing generation through uprates, can go a long way toward meeting future electricity demands.

Nuclear energy is abundant, efficient, cheap and doesn't harm the environment.

• **Cost.** Compared to other major energy sources, nuclear power is the cheapest to produce. The average electricity production cost in 2000 for nuclear energy was 1.76 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared to coal (1.79 cents), oil (5.28 cents) and gas (5.59 cents).

• **Technology.** To help meet the demand for additional power—from both new and existing plants—new advanced-design reactors are being developed. They are faster and less expensive to build than previous reactors because they are smaller, modular, standardized and prefabricated, with simplified safety systems and fuel configuration.

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