

Fermium Encyclopedia Article

Fermium

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Fermium

Fermium is a transuranium element with **atomic number** 100. Its atomic **mass** is 257.0951 and its chemical symbol is Fm.

Properties

All isotopes of fermium are radioactive, with fermium-257 having the longest half life, 20.1 hours. Thus far, too little fermium has been prepared for scientists to determine its physical properties. Research suggests that its chemical properties are similar to those of **erbium**, above it in the **periodic table**.

Occurrence and Extraction

Fermium has never been discovered in the Earth's crust and is not thought to be present there. It is prepared artificially in particle accelerators by bombarding heavy transuranium elements, such as **californium**, with alpha particles.

Discovery and Naming

Fermium was discovered in 1952 as one of the byproducts of the first **hydrogen** bomb test at Eniwetok Atoll, Marshall Islands, in the Pacific Ocean. **Albert Ghiorso** led the team of researchers from the University of California that made the discovery. The team decided to name the element in honor of the Italian physicist Enrico Fermi (1901-54) who made many important scientific discoveries and was a leader of the U.S. effort to build the world's first atomic bomb during World War II.

Uses

Fermium exists in such small amounts that it has no practical uses.