

Uranium Encyclopedia Article

Uranium

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Uranium

Uranium is a dense, silvery metallic element with the highest atomic mass of any naturally occurring element. It is the forty-seventh most abundant element in the earth's crust. All of the isotopes of uranium are radioactive, which accounts for a portion of the **background radiation** that is a natural part of the **environment**. In the 1930s, scientists discovered that one **isotope** of uranium, uranium-235, could be fissioned, or split. This information brought about a revolution in human society. The potential for **nuclear fission** is demonstrated by the fact that it has made possible not only the world's most destructive weapons, but also the generation of energy in a new way. Regardless of the purpose for which it is used, nuclear fission has created severe waste disposal problems which the world is struggling to solve.

See Also

High-Level Radioactive Waste; Nuclear Power; Nuclear Weapons; Radioactive Waste; Radioactivity