



# FUNDAMENTALS OF **NUCLEAR ENGINEERING**

BRENT J. LEWIS, E. NIHAN ONDER  
AND ANDREW A. PRUDIL

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## **Fundamentals of Nuclear Engineering**



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## Contents

**Preface** *xv*

**Acknowledgements** *xvii*

**About the Companion Website** *xix*

**Prologue** *1*

Introduction *1*

Organization of the book *2*

### **1 Atomic and Nuclear Theory** *9*

1.1 Historical Review *9*

1.2 Models of the Nucleus *10*

1.2.1 Field Unification Theories *10*

1.2.2 Nuclear Composition and Stability *13*

1.2.3 Mass–energy Relationships *17*

1.2.4 Decay Schemes *20*

1.2.5 Nuclear Models *23*

1.2.5.1 Nuclear Shell Model *24*

1.2.5.2 Parity *26*

1.2.5.3 Extreme Single Particle Shell Model *27*

1.2.6 Nuclear Transformations *29*

1.2.6.1 Gamma Transitions *30*

1.2.6.2 Beta Transitions *32*

1.2.6.3 Alpha Decay *35*

1.2.7 The Fission Process *38*

1.2.7.1 Spontaneous Fission *38*

1.2.7.2 Equal Charge Displacement (ECD) Model for Fission Products *39*

1.2.8 Nuclear Reactions *41*

1.2.9 Cross-sections and Neutron Activation Reactions *42*

1.2.9.1 Rates of Reaction *45*

1.2.9.2 Scattering Cross-section *48*

Bibliography *48*

Exercises *48*

Problems *49*

### **2 Nuclear Reactor Design and Physics** *53*

2.1 Overall Concept and Description of Nuclear Reactors *53*

2.1.1 Brief Summary of Types of Reactor *54*

2.1.1.1	Light Water Reactors	56
2.1.1.2	Heavy Water Reactors	59
2.1.2	Small Nuclear Power Reactors	60
2.1.3	Advanced Nuclear Power Reactors	62
2.1.4	Generation IV Designs	65
2.2	Neutron Diffusion	71
2.3	Slowing Down of Neutrons	75
2.3.0.1	Slowing Down of Neutrons in an Infinite (No Leakage) Non-absorbing (No Fuel) Media	79
2.3.0.2	Slowing Down in Infinite (No Leakage) Media with Capture	81
2.3.1	Fermi Age Equation	81
2.3.2	Solution of the Fermi Age Equation	82
2.4	Criticality and the Steady State	86
2.4.1	The Critical Equation	90
2.4.1.1	One-group Critical Equation	90
2.4.1.2	Modified One-group Critical Equation	91
2.4.1.3	Two-group Critical Equation	91
2.4.1.4	Fermi Age Critical Equation	92
2.4.1.5	Calculation of Buckling	93
2.4.1.6	Calculation of Critical Size and Composition	93
2.4.2	Reflector	94
2.4.2.1	One-group Diffusion Method	95
2.5	Advanced Reactor Physics	96
2.5.1	Derivation of the Neutron Transport Equation	97
2.5.1.1	Neutron Scattering	98
2.5.1.2	Neutron Losses Due to Absorption	99
2.5.1.3	Neutron Production from Fission	99
2.5.1.4	Loss of Neutrons by Streaming from the Volume	99
2.5.1.5	Other Neutron Sources	100
2.5.1.6	Combining to Obtain the Neutron Transport Equation	100
2.5.2	Approximations to the Transport Equation	101
2.5.2.1	Time Independent Formulation	101
2.5.2.2	Multiple Energy Group Approximation	101
2.5.2.3	Neutron Diffusion Equation	102
2.5.3	Solution of the Transport and Diffusion Equations	106
2.5.3.1	Deterministic Methods	106
2.5.3.2	Cell and Lattice Method	106
2.5.3.3	Single-group Neutron Diffusion Equation	107
2.5.3.4	Multigroup Neutron Diffusion Equation	107
2.5.3.5	Monte-Carlo Methods	109
2.5.3.6	Perturbation Theory and the Adjoint Flux	110
	Bibliography	114
	Exercises	115
	Problems	115
<b>3</b>	<b>Nuclear Reactor Dynamics and Control</b>	<b>120</b>
3.1	Overview of Reactor Kinetics Behaviour	120
3.1.0.1	Prompt Critical State	124
3.1.0.2	Prompt Jump (or Drop)	124



3.2	Point Reactor Model and the Inhour Equation	125
3.2.0.1	Inhour Equation	128
3.2.0.2	One-delayed Neutron Group	130
3.2.0.3	Prompt Jump Approximation	131
3.2.0.4	Dynamics of Space–Time Kinetic Equations	132
3.2.1	Reactivity Effects and Poisoning	135
3.2.1.1	Effect of Temperature and Voids on Reactivity	136
3.2.1.2	Temperature Coefficient of Reactivity	136
3.2.1.3	Void Coefficient	138
3.3	Reactor Control	138
3.3.0.1	Control Rods	140
3.3.0.2	Cluster and Cruciform Rods	141
3.3.0.3	Partially-inserted Control Rods	144
3.3.0.4	Zone Controllers	144
3.3.0.5	Chemical Shim and Burnable Poisons	144
3.3.0.6	Burnable Poisons	146
3.4	Nuclear Fuel Management	146
3.4.0.1	Isotopic Composition of Fuel	146
3.4.1	Isotope Concentrations and Depletion Equations	147
3.4.1.1	Plutonium Skin Effect	151
3.4.1.2	High-purity Isotopic Production ( $^{239}\text{Pu}$ )	152
3.4.2	Production of Fission Products	154
3.4.3	Effect of Burnup on Reactivity	156
3.4.3.1	Fission Product Effect on Reactivity	156
3.4.3.2	Xenon ( $\text{Xe-135}$ ) Poisoning	157
3.4.3.3	Samarium ( $\text{Sm-149}$ ) Poisoning	159
3.4.3.4	$^{239}\text{Pu}$ Peak and Fuel Reactivity	160
3.4.4	Thorium Depletion Equations	162
3.4.5	Refueling Scheme Optimization	165
3.4.5.1	Constraints	165
3.4.5.2	On-power Refueling	166
3.4.5.3	Batch Refueling	168
	Bibliography	168
	Exercises	169
	Problems	169
<b>4</b>	<b>Nuclear Reactor Materials and Fuel Engineering</b>	<b>174</b>
4.1	Nuclear Reactor Materials	174
4.1.1	Fuel Material Properties	186
4.1.1.1	Metal Fuels	186
4.1.1.2	Ceramic Fuels: Oxides	188
4.1.1.3	Ceramic Fuels: Carbides	189
4.1.1.4	Ceramic Fuels: Nitrides	189
4.1.1.5	Composite Fuels	189
4.1.2	Structural Material Properties	190
4.1.3	Irradiation Effects on Materials	190
4.1.3.1	Energy Deposition Causing Radiolysis and Defect Creation	190
4.1.4	Corrosion and Materials Degradation	196
4.1.4.1	Corrosion in Gas-Cooled Systems	196

4.1.4.2	Corrosion in Water-Cooled Systems	196
4.1.4.3	Flow-Accelerated Corrosion	198
4.1.4.4	Galvanic Corrosion	198
4.1.4.5	Stress Corrosion Cracking	198
4.1.4.6	Crevice Corrosion	199
4.1.4.7	Other Material Degradation Effects	199
4.2	Fuel Production	202
4.2.1	The Fuel Cycle	202
4.2.2	Sources of Reactor Fuel Materials	203
4.2.2.1	Nuclear Fuel Materials	203
4.2.3	Fuel Production	205
4.2.3.1	Uranium	205
4.2.3.2	Thorium	209
4.2.4	Fuel Fabrication	209
4.2.4.1	Uranium Metal	209
4.2.4.2	Uranium Dioxide	209
4.2.5	Uranium Isotope Enrichment	212
4.2.5.1	Gaseous Diffusion	214
4.2.5.2	Gas Centrifuge	215
4.2.5.3	Laser Methods	217
4.2.6	Reprocessing of Spent Fuel	217
4.2.6.1	Solvent Extraction Method	217
4.3	Fuel Element Thermal Performance	218
4.3.1	Heat Generation	218
4.3.1.1	Distribution of Heat Generation in a Reactor Core	221
4.3.1.2	Power Peaking Factor	223
4.3.1.3	Heat Generation within a Fuel Element in a Heterogeneous Core (Cylindrical Reactor)	224
4.3.1.4	Heat Generation During Shutdown	225
4.3.1.5	Fission Rate	226
4.3.2	Fuel Material Properties	226
4.3.2.1	Thermal Conductivity Theory	226
4.3.2.2	Effects on Thermal Conductivity	229
4.3.2.3	Correlations of Fuel Thermal Properties	230
4.3.3	Temperature Profiles in Cylindrical Rods	236
4.3.3.1	Fuel Surface Temperature	238
4.4	Fuel Chemistry	240
4.4.1	Phase Diagrams	240
4.4.2	Defect Structures of Oxides	243
4.4.3	Oxygen Potential of the Fuel	244
4.4.4	Fuel Vaporization	246
4.4.4.1	Actinide Redistribution	246
4.5	Fuel Restructuring	248
4.5.1	Pore Migration	248
4.5.2	Columnar-Grain Growth	249
4.5.3	Equiaxed-Grain Growth	250
4.6	Fission Product Behaviour	252
4.6.1	Elemental Yields of Fission Products	253
4.6.2	Physical State of Fission Products	256

4.6.2.1	Chemical State of Fission Products	256
4.6.2.2	Fission Product Migration	263
4.6.2.3	Effect of Burnup	264
4.6.2.4	Fuel Swelling Due to Solid Fission Products	264
4.6.3	Swelling Due to Fission Gases	266
4.6.3.1	Number of Gas Atoms in a Bubble	268
4.6.3.2	Swelling Due to Gas Bubbles and Overall Gas Balance	271
4.6.3.3	Growth of Stationary Bubbles	271
4.6.3.4	Bubble Growth by Coalescence	272
4.6.4	Fission Gas Release	274
4.6.4.1	Recoil Release	275
4.6.4.2	Knockout Release	276
4.6.4.3	Diffusional Release	277
4.6.4.4	Gas Release Due to Bubble Interconnection	281
4.6.4.5	Sweeping of Gas Bubbles by Grain Boundaries	284
4.7	Fuel Performance	285
4.7.1	Fuel Defect Mechanisms	285
4.7.1.1	CANDU Reactors	285
4.7.1.2	Light Water Reactors	287
4.7.1.3	Power Ramp Failures	288
4.7.2	Fuel Performance Codes	290
4.7.2.1	Canadian Codes	290
4.7.2.2	International Codes	290
	References	297
	Exercises	306
	Problems	310
<b>5</b>	<b>Thermal Hydraulics</b>	<b>314</b>
5.1	Choice of Coolant	314
5.2	Definitions and Simple Two-Phase Flow Relationships	315
5.3	Two-Phase Flow	318
5.3.1	Flow Pattern Maps and Transition of Flow Patterns	321
5.3.1.1	Transition of Flow Patterns in a Vertical Flow	321
5.3.1.2	Transition of Flow Patterns in a Horizontal Flow	323
5.3.2	Void Fraction	323
5.3.2.1	Definition and Relationship	323
5.3.2.2	Flow Pattern Transitions Based on Void Fractions	325
5.3.2.3	Void Fraction Correlations	325
5.3.3	Single- and Two-Phase Conservation Equations	330
5.3.3.1	Single-Phase Conservation Equations	330
5.3.3.2	Two-Phase Flow Conservation Equations	336
5.4	Pressure Drop	343
5.4.1	Single-Phase Pressure Drop	345
5.4.1.1	Friction Factor	347
5.4.1.2	Single-Phase Local Losses	350
5.4.2	Two-Phase Pressure Drop	350
5.4.2.1	Two-Phase Frictional Pressure Drop	353
5.4.2.2	Two-Phase Form Losses for Different Pipe Fixtures	370
5.5	Heat Transfer	380

5.5.1	Single-Phase Forced Convective Heat Transfer	396
5.5.1.1	Viscous Flow	397
5.5.1.2	Boundary Layer	400
5.5.1.3	Forced Convection Over a Plate (External Flow)	408
5.5.1.4	Forced Convection in a Pipe (Internal Flow)	416
5.5.1.5	Forced Convection in Non-Circular Pipes and Rod Bundles	427
5.5.2	Single-Phase Natural Convective Heat Transfer	442
5.5.2.1	Natural Convection Over a Plate	446
5.5.2.2	Empirical Natural Convective Heat Transfer Correlations for Various Geometries	453
5.5.3	Fundamentals of Phase Change and Boiling	456
5.5.3.1	Phase Change	456
5.5.3.2	Classification of Boiling	460
5.5.3.3	Pool and Forced Convective Boiling	460
5.5.4	Subcooled Boiling	463
5.5.4.1	Forced Convection	463
5.5.4.2	Pool Boiling	474
5.5.5	Saturated Nucleate Boiling and Forced Convective Evaporation	474
5.5.5.1	Forced Convection	474
5.5.5.2	Pool Boiling	488
5.5.6	Critical Heat Flux	490
5.5.6.1	CHF Mechanisms for Forced Convective Boiling	494
5.5.6.2	Parametric Trends	497
5.5.6.3	CHF Prediction Methods for Forced Convective Boiling in Tubes	504
5.5.6.4	Separate Effects	516
5.5.6.5	CHF Prediction Methods for Forced Convective Boiling in Rod Bundles	523
5.5.6.6	Pool Boiling CHF	524
5.5.7	Post-Critical Heat Flux	529
5.5.7.1	Transition Boiling	530
5.5.7.2	Minimum Film Boiling	531
5.5.7.3	Film Boiling	534
5.5.7.4	Pool Film Boiling	552
5.5.8	Condensation	555
5.5.8.1	Filmwise Condensation in Vertical Tubes	556
5.5.8.2	Filmwise Condensation in Horizontal Tubes	557
5.5.8.3	Dropwise Condensation	559
5.5.8.4	Non-Condensable Gases	559
	References	559
	Exercises	570
<b>6</b>	<b>Nuclear Reactor Safety</b>	<b>573</b>
6.1	Reactor Licensing and Regulation	573
6.1.1	CANDU Safety Philosophy	573
6.1.2	Licensing Process in the United States	580
6.1.3	Civilian/Military Regulation in Other Countries	585
6.2	General Principles of Reactor Safety	586
6.2.1	Three Levels of Safety	586
6.2.2	Multiple Barriers	587
6.2.3	Reactor Protection System	588

6.3	Engineered Safety Features	590
6.3.1	Emergency Core Cooling System (ECCS)	590
6.3.2	Containment Systems	592
6.3.3	Hydrogen Control	594
6.4	Reactor Safety Analysis	597
6.4.1	Loss-of-Coolant Accident (LOCA)	597
6.4.2	Thermal Hydraulic and Heat Removal Analyses	603
6.4.2.1	Nuclear Heat Transport	603
6.4.2.2	Boiling Heat Transfer	611
6.4.2.3	Blowdown Modelling	613
6.4.3	Evaluation Computer Codes	618
6.4.3.1	Example of Codes	619
6.5	Reliability and Risk Assessment	619
6.5.1	Risk Determination in Nuclear Plants	622
6.6	Nuclear Reactor Accidents	624
6.6.1	Civilian Reactor Accidents	625
6.6.1.1	Three Mile Island (TMI) – Unit 2	627
6.6.1.2	Chernobyl – Unit 4	629
6.6.1.3	Fukushima Accident	634
6.6.1.4	Activity Release in Accidents	640
6.6.2	Nuclear-Powered Submarine Accidents	640
6.7	Radiation Dose Calculations	640
6.7.1	Radiation Exposure Pathways	640
6.7.2	Standards of Radiation Protection	642
6.7.3	Meteorology and the Dispersion of Effluents	645
6.7.4	Diffusion of Effluents	646
6.7.4.1	Effect of Deposition/Fallout and Radioactive Decay	652
6.7.5	Radiation Doses from Radioactive Effluents	653
6.7.5.1	Whole-Body Dose: External Dose from Plume	653
6.7.5.2	Internal Inhalation Dose: Thyroid Dose	654
6.7.5.3	Doses from Ground-Deposited Radionuclides	657
6.7.5.4	Direct Gamma-Ray Dose	659
6.8	Nuclear Emergency Response	659
6.8.1	Accident Classification	660
6.8.2	Dose Projections	661
6.8.2.1	Urgent Phase	661
6.8.2.2	Late Phase	664
6.9	Fission Product Release and Severe Core Damage Phenomena	669
6.9.1	Source Term Overview	669
6.9.2	Fission Product Release	674
6.9.2.1	Containment Release of Fission Products	679
6.9.3	Severe Accident Behaviour	686
6.9.3.1	Severe Core Damage Phenomena	691
6.9.3.2	Stages of Severe Accident Behaviour	694
6.9.3.3	Summary of Key Phenomenological Issues	698
	References	698
	Exercises	703
	Problems	706

<b>7</b>	<b>Health Physics and Radiation Protection</b>	<b>711</b>
7.1	Interaction of Radiation with Matter	711
7.1.1	Charged Particles	711
7.1.1.1	Baryons (Charged Particles: $\alpha$ , p, d, t, $^3\text{He}$ , Fission Fragments)	711
7.1.1.2	Specific Ionization	713
7.1.1.3	Fission Products	716
7.1.1.4	Leptons (Light Charged Particles: Electrons, $\beta^-$ )	716
7.1.1.5	Range–Energy Relationships	718
7.1.2	Electromagnetic Radiation	718
7.1.2.1	Linear and Mass Attenuation Coefficients	723
7.1.2.2	Energy Transfer	723
7.1.2.3	Range	728
7.1.3	Neutral Particles: Neutrons	728
7.1.3.1	Elastic and Inelastic Interactions	728
7.1.3.2	Capture and Spallation Interactions	729
7.2	Health Physics and Radiation Protection	730
7.2.1	Doses and Units	730
7.2.1.1	Irradiation Intensity or Irradiation Rate	731
7.2.1.2	Radiation Other than Photons	732
7.2.1.3	Biological Factors	732
7.2.2	Radiological Protection	736
7.2.2.1	Historical Perspective	737
7.2.2.2	Protection Quantities	738
7.2.2.3	Radiation Weighting	738
7.2.2.4	Operational Quantities	739
7.2.2.5	Determination of Absorbed Dose Distributions in the Human Body	742
7.2.2.6	Conversion Coefficients	743
7.2.2.7	Relationships Between Protection and Operational Quantities	743
7.2.2.8	Standards of Radiation Protection	743
7.2.2.9	Estimates of Probability	745
7.2.2.10	Types of Occupational Exposure	749
7.2.3	Dosimetry	750
7.2.4	Microdosimetry	755
7.2.4.1	Microdosimetric Quantities and Distributions	758
7.2.4.2	Calculation of Microdosimetric Spectra	763
7.3	Biological Effects of Radiation	763
7.3.1	Biodosimetry	773
7.3.2	Safety Norms	775
7.3.2.1	Secondary Norms	776
7.3.2.2	Irradiation by Contact and Internal Contamination	777
7.3.2.3	Maximum Allowable Activity in Air (in $\mu\text{Ci cm}^{-3}$ )	778
7.4	Radiation Protection	779
7.4.1	Time	782
7.4.2	Distance	783
7.4.3	Shielding	783
7.4.3.1	Plane Circular Source	784
7.4.3.2	Cylindrical Source	785
7.5	Contamination Treatment	788
7.6	Space Radiation	788

7.6.1	Space Crew Exposure on Mir and the ISS	794
7.6.2	Dose Determination Approach	799
	References	801
	Exercises	804
	Problems	807
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>Physical Constants and Conversion Factors</b>	<b>811</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>Table of Atomic Mass Excesses</b>	<b>813</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>Some Values of Nuclear Spins and Parities</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>Reactor Physics Parameters</b>	<b>903</b>
<b>Appendix 5</b>	<b>Physical and Biological Data for Radionuclides</b>	<b>905</b>
<b>Appendix 6</b>	<b>Cross-Sections of Some Radionuclides</b>	<b>907</b>
<b>Appendix 7</b>	<b>Properties of Elements and Some Molecules</b>	<b>909</b>
<b>Appendix 8</b>	<b>Isotopic Cross-Sections</b>	<b>913</b>
<b>Appendix 9</b>	<b>Direct and Cumulative Thermal Fission Product Yields for Various Fissile Isotopes</b>	<b>926</b>
<b>Index</b>		<b>943</b>





## Preface

This book is developed from course lecture notes given in the graduate programme in Nuclear Engineering at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC), Kingston, ON, and École Polytechnique, Montreal, QC, and an undergraduate course at Queen's University, Kingston, ON. It is further based on subject research in nuclear fuel behaviour, thermal hydraulics and radiation protection (for aircrew and space crew) as research scientists at the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories [formally the Chalk River Laboratories of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)] and as a university educator and Industrial Research Chair in Nuclear Fuel sponsored by the CANDU Owners Group (COG), University Network of Excellence in Nuclear Engineering (UNENE) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). This book focuses on undergraduate and graduate-level teaching in nuclear engineering with the development of concepts in a systematic manner. It is relevant to the nuclear professional summarizing some key research developments in the fields of nuclear fuel behaviour, health physics and reactor thermal hydraulics. Moreover, it especially fills an important need and niche as a modern and comprehensive textbook for undergraduate and graduate instruction and the learning of core subjects in atomic and nuclear theory, nuclear reactor physics, nuclear reactor dynamics and control, nuclear fuel engineering, thermal hydraulics, nuclear reactor safety, and health physics and radiation protection. The textbook also contains extensive nuclear and reactor physics data, and fundamental constants detailed in several Appendices as developed from recent data libraries. Solved exercises are provided to augment the learning of the text material. In addition, a number of solved problems used for various tests and examinations in the courses are also included at the end of each chapter. This package therefore provides a complete set of source material and problems with a single textbook for undergraduate and graduate course instruction.

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## Acknowledgements

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PowerPoint slides developed from material in this book for courses CC511 (Health Physics and Radiation Protection), CC523 (Nuclear Reactor Engineering) and CC533 (Nuclear Fuel Engineering) were graciously provided by Professors E. Corcoran and P. Chan from the Royal Military College of Canada for use on the Wiley web site.

The book is dedicated to the many graduate students we have had the pleasure to supervise and mentor over the many years. Finally, we would like to thank our colleagues for their continual friendship and collaboration, and especially our families for their patience and loving support.



## About the Companion Website

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## Prologue

### Introduction

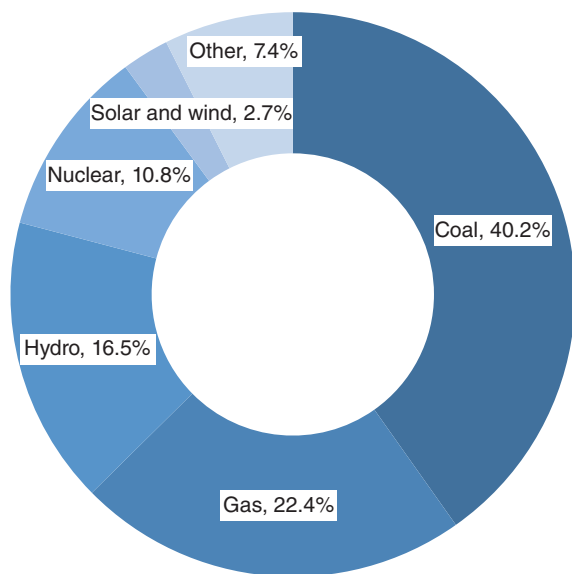
Nuclear technology was first developed in the 1940s during research on weapons production during the World War II. Attention turned to commercial nuclear power in the 1950s. Today, nuclear energy is an important source of electricity production for three main reasons: (i) supply, (ii) environmental footprint (i.e., climate change) and (iii) economics.

As shown in Figure P.1, nuclear power provides about 11% of the global electricity needs. In particular, as of 2015, there have been 16 000 reactor years of experience with 436 commercial power reactors in 31 countries that supply 378 000 MW (electrical) of total capacity; in addition, 67 nuclear power reactors are also under construction with 166 reactors being planned (Table P.1). Fifty-six countries operate a total of 240 research reactors as a source of neutrons for scientific research and for the production of medical and industrial isotopes. Moreover, there are about 180 nuclear reactors that power ships and submarines.

From 1990 to 2010, the world electricity (e) capacity rose by 57 GWe (17.75%), with a rise in electricity produced from nuclear power of 755 TWh (40%), as shown in Figure P.2, due to new plant construction (36%), uprating of other plants (7%) and an increase in availability of plants (57%). The USA itself accounts for nearly one third of the world's nuclear electricity (see the first column of Table P.1), where nuclear power plant performance has increased over the past twenty years with capacity factors over 90% in five of the seven years up to 2013. In 2011 and 2012, both capacity and output diminished, with cutbacks in Germany and Japan (i.e., in Japan dropping from 13 TWh in 2010 to 0 TWh in 2015 as seen in Table P.1) following the Fukushima reactor accident (see Chapter 6).

Nuclear power is important because of its relatively low environmental footprint in terms of climate change. The lifecycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from different forms of electricity generation for all phases of the process including construction, operation, and decommissioning are shown in Figure P.3 based on the analysis of twenty studies. This analysis shows that generating electricity from fossil fuels results in much greater emissions than that from nuclear or renewable generation.

Data for costs in the United States for various sources of electricity production from 1995 to 2012 (Figure P.4) show nuclear generation (i.e., for the fuel plus operation and maintenance) at 2.40 cents/kWh, as compared with coal at 3.27 cents/kWh and gas at 3.40 cents/kWh. These costs exclude indirect costs and capital costs that are plant/utility specific and also depend on the age of the plant.



**Figure P.1** World electricity production in 2012. Source: World nuclear association.

A finish study for projected electricity costs in 2003 suggested nuclear production at €2.37 cents/kWh, coal at €2.63 cents/kWh and natural gas at €3.22 cents/kWh (Figure P.5). This study assumed a 91% capacity factor, 5% interest rate and 40-year plant life. The relative effects of capital and fuel costs are depicted. Nuclear production specifically has a relatively high capital cost that depends importantly on the financing costs and length of time for construction. On the other hand, the fuel costs are much lower, so that once a nuclear plant is built its costs are more predictable compared to gas or coal. In addition, a carbon tax can impact costs, that is, with carbon emissions trading at €20/t CO<sub>2</sub>, the electricity costs for coal and gas increase to €4.25 and 3.92 cents/kWh, respectively. Finally, in 2015, a report from the Institute for Energy Research on the levelized cost of electricity from existing generation resources suggested nuclear production at slightly over \$90/MWh, compared with coal at almost \$100/MWh and gas just over \$70/MWh.

## Organization of the book

The book covers a broad range of key areas in the field of nuclear engineering and is organized into seven chapters, consisting of: Chapter 1: Atomic and Nuclear Theory; Chapter 2: Nuclear Reactor Design and Physics; Chapter 3: Nuclear Reactor Dynamics and Control; Chapter 4: Nuclear Reactor Materials and Fuel Engineering; Chapter 5: Thermal Hydraulics; Chapter 6: Nuclear Reactor Safety; and Chapter 7: Health Physics and Radiation Protection. Information in the book is provided at both an introductory and a more advanced level and also draws on, in part, recent state-of-the-art research in nuclear fuel behaviour, reactor safety and thermal hydraulics. The book chapters are presented in a logical manner from basic theory to design, construction, operation, control and safety of nuclear reactors, including the need for health physics and radiation protection. It also contains nine appendices of relevant nuclear and reactor physics data as well as fundamental constants, cross-sections and fission product yields. This work also includes a complete exercise manual with solved problems for the exercises and problems presented at the end of each chapter.



Table P.1 World nuclear power reactors and uranium requirements

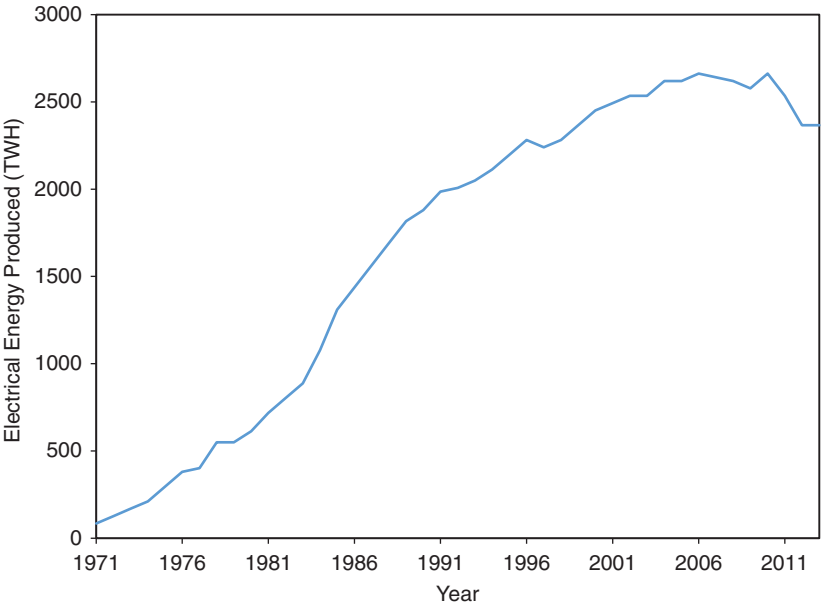
Country	Nuclear electricity generation 2014  (or TWh)	Reactors operable August 2015		Reactors under construction August 2015		Reactors planned August 2015		Reactors proposed August 2015		Uranium required 2015	
		% electricity	No.	MWe net	No.	MWe gross	No.	MWe gross	No.	MWe gross	tonnes U
Argentina	5.3	4.0	3	1 627	1	27	2	1 950	2	1 300	215
Armenia	2.3	30.7	1	376	0	0	1	1 060			88
Bangladesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2 400	0	0	0
Belarus	0	0	0	0	2	2 388	0	0	2	2 400	0
Belgium	32.1	47.5	7	5 943	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 017
Brazil	14.5	2.9	2	1 901	1	1 405	0	0	4	4 000	326
Bulgaria	15.0	31.8	2	1 906	0	0	1	950	0	0	324
Canada	98.6	16.8	19	13 553	0	0	2	1 500	3	3 800	1 784
Chile	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4 400	0
China	123.8	2.4	26	23 144	25	27 393	43	49 970	136	153 000	8 161
Czech Republic	28.6	35.8	6	3 904	0	0	2	2 400	1	1 200	566
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2 400	2	2 400	0
Finland	22.6	34.6	4	2 741	1	1 700	1	1 200	1	1 500	751
France	418.0	76.9	58	63 130	1	1 750	0	0	1	1 750	9 230
Germany	91.8	15.8	8	10 728	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 889
Hungary	14.8	53.6	4	1 889	0	0	2	2 400	0	0	357
India	33.2	3.5	21	5 302	6	4 300	22	21 300	35	40 000	1 579
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	30	4	4 000	0
Iran	3.7	1.5	1	915	0	0	2	2 000	7	6 300	176
Israel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1 200	0
Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Japan	0	0	43	40 480	3	3 036	9	12 947	3	4 145	2 549
Jordan	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2 000			0
Kazakhstan	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	600	2	600	0
Korea DPR (North)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	950	0
Korea RO (South)	149.2	30.4	24	21 677	4	5 600	8	11 600	0	0	5 022

(Continued)

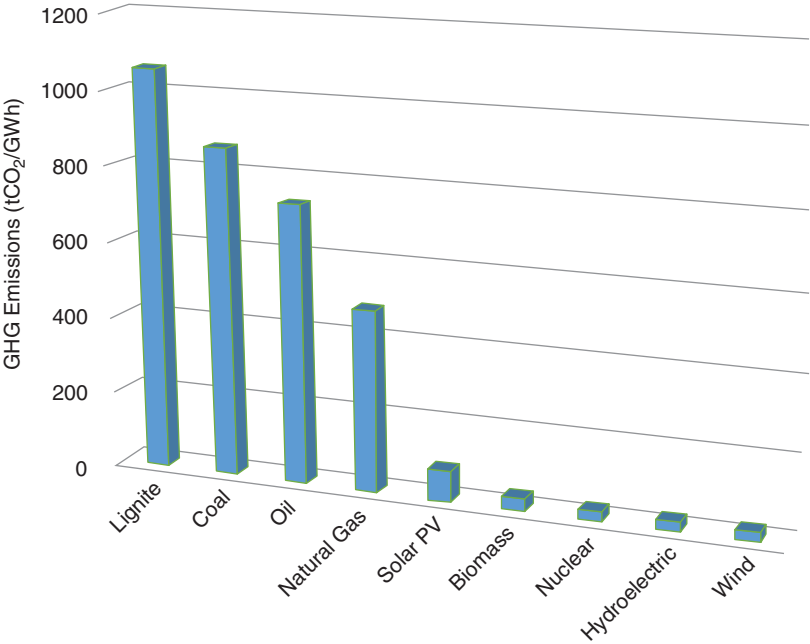
Table P.1 (Continued)

Country	Nuclear electricity generation 2014 Billion kWh (or TWh)	Reactors operable August 2015		Reactors under construction August 2015		Reactors planned August 2015		Reactors proposed August 2015		Uranium required 2015	
		% electricity	No.	MWe net	No.	MWe gross	No.	MWe gross	No.	MWe gross	tonnes U
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1350	0	0	0
Malaysia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2000	0
Mexico	9.3	5.6	2	1600	0	0	0	0	2	2000	270
Netherlands	3.9	4.0	1	485	0	0	0	0	1	1000	103
Pakistan	4.6	4.3	3	725	2	680	2	2300	0	0	101
Poland	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6000	0	0	0
Romania	10.8	18.5	2	1310	0	0	2	1440	1	655	179
Russia	169.1	18.6	34	25 264	9	7968	31	33 264	18	16 000	4206
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	17 000	0
Slovakia	14.4	56.8	4	1816	2	942	0	0	1	1200	466
Slovenia	6.1	37.2	1	696	0	0	0	0	1	1000	137
South Africa	14.8	6.2	2	1830	0	0	0	0	8	9600	305
Spain	54.9	20.4	7	7002	0	0	0	0	0	0	1274
Sweden	62.3	41.5	10	9487	0	0	0	0	0	0	1516
Switzerland	26.5	37.9	5	3333	0	0	0	0	3	4000	521
Thailand	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5000	0
Turkey	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4800	4	4500	0
Ukraine	83.1	49.4	15	13 107	0	0	2	1900	11	12 000	2366
UAE	0	0	0	0	3	4200	1	1400	10	14 400	0
United Kingdom	57.9	17.2	16	9373	0	0	4	6680	7	8920	1738
USA	798.6	19.5	99	98 792	5	6018	5	6063	17	26 000	18 692
Vietnam	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4800	6	6700	0
<b>World</b>	<b>2411</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>378 995</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>70 107</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>186 704</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>364 920</b>	<b>66 883</b>

Source: World nuclear association.



**Figure P.2** Nuclear electricity production in the world. Source: World nuclear association.



**Figure P.3** Average lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from different sources of electricity generation. Source: World nuclear association.

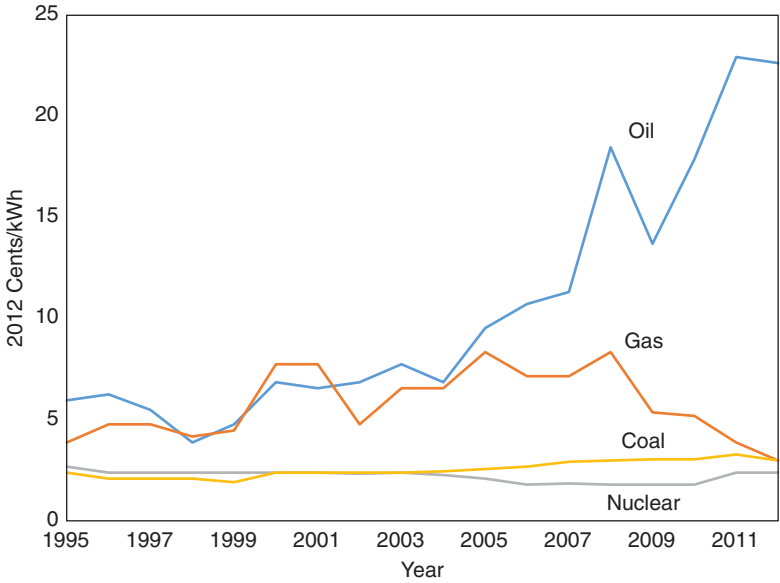


Figure P.4 US electricity production costs from 1995 to 2012. Source: World nuclear association.

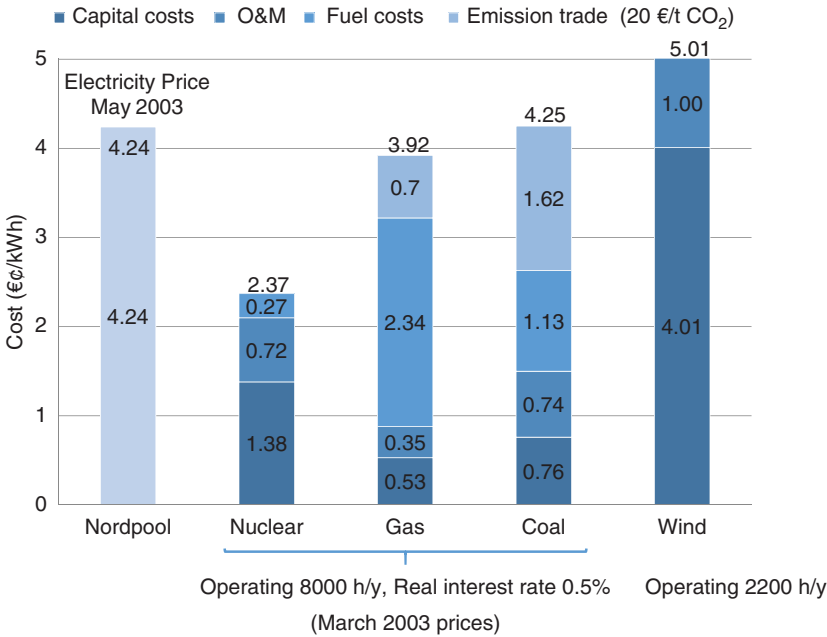


Figure P.5 Projected electricity costs for Finland in 2003. Source: World nuclear association.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of atomic and nuclear theory, including historical developments and a modern understanding of the underlying forces of nature. It particularly explains nuclear composition and stability in nature and how energy release is “thermodynamically” favoured in the fission process. This energy release occurs through a mass loss between the reactants and products as a result of Einstein’s mass-energy equivalence relationship and is the source of energy in nuclear power. The chapter also details generalized schemes and systematics for alpha, beta and gamma decay and transition processes. Importantly, by utilizing nuclear models, it explains *why* specific decay systematics are observed for isotopes in accordance with nuclear selection rules. The theory provides a fundamental understanding of decay processes and their energies as well as the observed nuclear spin and parity of nuclides. It also details the important concepts of nuclear reactions and cross sections as needed for reactor physics analysis in the design of the critical reactor core in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2 illustrates the overall design of reactors, including past, present and future concepts. It describes the physics of criticality, including introductory reactor theory, design and operation. In the steady-state, sources and losses of neutrons in the reactor are examined for the critical state employing diffusion theory for leakage of neutrons from the core. Diffusion theory in itself is an approximation of the more generalized neutron transport equation. The development of this latter equation from advanced reactor theory is also presented, as is its simplification to diffusion theory with the assumption of isotropic neutron scattering. Moreover, the solution of the more detailed neutron transport equation using modern computational methods is explained.

Chapter 3 examines the dynamical nature of the reactor using a “point kinetics” approach. This chapter involves a discussion of the overall reactivity of the system for control of the reactor. The time-dependent behaviour of the reactor for start-up, shutdown or a change in power is discussed as a further extension of the steady-state development in Chapter 2. It details how the reactor can be controlled solely from the production of delayed neutrons that are produced by radioactive decay of some fission products. The effects of the loss of fissile material and the production of fission product “poisons” are discussed. Engineered devices used to control the reactor are further detailed. Also, the specifics for the fuelling of the reactor as well as different fuel management schemes are examined.

Chapter 4 details nuclear reactor materials, including the properties of structural materials, and irradiation effects on materials that can lead to corrosion and materials degradation/deformation. Such degradation includes irradiation hardening, creep and growth, embrittlement and crud formation. It provides a complete description of fuel rod materials, including advanced fuel designs and state-of-the-art efforts for development of accident tolerant fuels following the Fukushima accident as described in Chapter 6. This chapter covers new additives in fuels to improve performance, as well as metallic and ceramic fuels (e.g., nitrides, silicides, carbides and mixed-oxide fuels). It also describes the fuel cycle with nuclear fuel fabrication and production, operation, fuel chemistry, restructuring and fission product behaviour, thermophysical properties of the fuel, fuel performance and reprocessing of spent fuel. Severe fuel damage phenomena are covered later in the book (in Chapter 6 on reactor safety).

Chapter 5 includes a treatise on reactor thermal hydraulics to describe heat transport from the core as well as flow conditions in the reactor coolant system. It details the different flow regimes, pressure drop, critical heat flux and condensation phenomena. This discussion includes modern correlations with a broadened review of single- and two-phase flow, including viscous/inviscid, internal (pipe)/external (tank) flow, and forced and natural convective flow. This more complete treatment is important to better understand both normal operating conditions, as well as abnormal reactor operations as detailed later in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 provides an understanding of nuclear reactor safety and reactor behaviour under abnormal conditions. It includes a discussion on reactor licensing and regulation as adopted in various countries. The chapter also discusses engineered safety features with emergency core coolant systems and reactor containment, various civil and military reactor accidents, radioactive plume migration and radiation dose analysis, nuclear emergency response and severe core damage phenomena.

Chapter 7 provides a description of the interaction of radiation with matter and fundamental concepts of health physics and radiation protection. Moreover, this chapter includes radiation dose assessment, the biological effects of radiation as well as radiation contamination treatment. It also describes the evolving subject of space-radiation protection.