

Nuclear Energy

Note 1. Operable Nuclear Reactors. A reactor is generally defined as operable while it possessed a full-power license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission or its predecessor the Atomic Energy Commission, or equivalent permission to operate, at the end of the year or month shown. The definition is liberal in that it does not exclude units retaining full-power licenses during long, non-routine shutdowns that for a time rendered them unable to generate electricity. Examples are:

(a) In 1985 the five then-active Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) units (Browns Ferry 1, 2, and 3, and Sequoyah 1 and 2) were shut down under a regulatory forced outage. All five units were idle for several years, restarting in 2007, 1991, 1995, 1988, and 1988, respectively and were counted as operable during the shutdowns.

(b) Shippingport was shut down from 1974 through 1976 for conversion to a light-water breeder reactor, but is counted as operable from 1957 until its retirement in 1982.

(c) Calvert Cliffs 2 was shut down in 1989 and 1990 for replacement of pressurizer heater sleeves but is counted as operable during those years.

Exceptions to the definition are Shoreham and Three Mile Island 2. Shoreham was granted a full-power license in April 1989, but was shut down two months later and never restarted. In 1991, the license was changed to Possession Only. Although not operable at the end of the year, Shoreham is counted as operable during 1989. A major accident closed Three Mile Island 2 in 1979, and although the unit retained its full-power license for several years, it is considered permanently shut down since that year.

The following nuclear generating units were retired in 2013: Crystal River 3 in February; Kewaunee in May; and San Onofre 2 and 3 in June. Vermont Yankee was retired in December 2014.

Note 2. Nuclear Capacity. Nuclear generating units may have more than one type of net capacity rating, including the following:

(a) Net Summer Capacity—The steady hourly output that generating equipment is expected to supply to system load, exclusive of auxiliary power, as demonstrated by test at the time of summer peak demand. Auxiliary power of a typical nuclear power plant is about 5% of gross generation.

(b) Net Design Capacity or Net Design Electrical Rating (DER)—The nominal net electrical output of a unit, specified by the utility and used for plant design.

Through 2007, the monthly capacity factors are calculated as the monthly nuclear electricity net generation divided by the maximum possible nuclear electricity net generation for that month. The maximum possible nuclear electricity net generation is the number of hours in the month (assuming 24-hour days, with no adjustment for changes to or from Daylight Savings Time) multiplied by the net summer capacity of operable nuclear generating units at the end of the month. That fraction is then multiplied by 100 to obtain a percentage. Annual capacity factors are calculated as the annual nuclear electricity net generation divided by the annual maximum possible nuclear electricity net generation (the sum of the monthly values for maximum possible nuclear electricity net generation). For the methodology used to calculate capacity factors beginning in 2008, see U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Electric Power Monthly*, Appendix C notes on “Average Capacity Factors.”

Table 8.1 Sources

Total Operable Units and Net Summer Capacity of Operable Units

1957–1982: Compiled from various sources, primarily U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Nuclear Reactor Programs, “U.S. Central Station Nuclear Electric Generating Units: Significant Milestones.”

1983 forward: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Form EIA-860, “Annual Electric Generator Report,” and predecessor forms; Form EIA-860M, “Monthly Update to the Annual Electric Generator Report”; and monthly updates as appropriate. For a list of operable units as of November 2011, see http://www.eia.gov/nuclear/reactors/stats_table1.html.

Nuclear Electricity Net Generation and Nuclear Share of Electricity Net Generation

1957 forward: Table 7.2a.

Capacity Factor

1973–2007: Calculated by EIA using the method described above in Note 2.

2008 forward: EIA, Form EIA-860, “Annual Electric Generator Report”; Form EIA-860M, “Monthly Update to the Annual Electric Generator Report”; and Form EIA-923, “Power Plant Operations Report.”