

Uranium:

It's One Cool Metal

If you make an "OK" sign with your thumb and forefinger, and then imagine a small ball of uranium the same size, that ball of uranium would weigh about half a kilogram. A baseball made of uranium would weigh about 4 kilograms (about 8.5 pounds)! One of the factors that distinguishes uranium is its very dense – about one-and-a-half times more dense than lead.



Where does uranium come from?

Some think the stars. Scientists believe the uranium we mine in Northern Saskatchewan today came from a large star explosion more than 6 billion years ago.



Today, we know that uranium is one of the more common elements in the Earth's crust. It's about 40 times more common than silver and 500 times more common than gold. It's a rich source of clean energy that's used in nuclear

generators to create about 16 percent of the world's electricity.



Uranium was discovered in 1789 by German chemist Martin Klaproth. It was named after the planet Uranus, which had been discovered just eight years earlier. But it took several generations of scientists to uncover uranium's special characteristics.



Polish-born scientist Marie Curie, born in 1867, was first to use the term "radioactive." Curie's work paved the way for the use of radioactivity in treating cancer.

Uranium has other important uses, as well. It can keep food from going bad and produce stronger crops. It's also used in exploring space, studying pollution and



propelling marine vessels.

But it's uranium's ability to release energy to generate electricity – without producing greenhouse gases – that has the biggest impact on the most people.



Uranium.
It's one cool metal.



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