



Atomic Accidents: A History of Nuclear Meltdowns and Disasters: From the Ozark Mountains to Fukushima

By James Mahaffey

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A gripping narrative of nuclear mishaps and meltdowns around the globe, all of which have proven pivotal to the advancement of nuclear science.

From the moment radiation was discovered in the late nineteenth century, nuclear science has had a rich history of innovative scientific exploration and discovery, coupled with mistakes, accidents, and downright disasters.

Mahaffey, a long-time advocate of continued nuclear research and nuclear energy, looks at each incident in turn and analyzes what happened and why, often discovering where scientists went wrong when analyzing past meltdowns.

Every incident has lead to new facets in understanding about the mighty atom?and Mahaffey puts forth what the future should be for this final frontier of science that still holds so much promise.

16 pages of color and B&W images, charts and graphs throughout

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Editorial Review

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Nuclear engineer Mahaffey's *Atomic Awakening* (2009) presented an engaging history of nuclear energy that came close to offering a ringing endorsement for its continued widespread use. Although his latest work focuses mostly on radioactivity's dark side, from its discovery in 1896 to its role in the recent Fukushima meltdown, Mahaffey nonetheless does argue persuasively that, by closely investigating its shortcomings, nuclear power can be made safer. Mahaffey begins with an episode of radiation poisoning that occurred in an Ozarks cave where hunters were exposed to radon gas, and offers a survey of nuclear weapons development, including the troubling disappearance of several H-bombs, before addressing history's most famous nuclear accidents. Entire chapters are devoted to dissecting what went wrong at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Fukushima, and Windscale, a lesser-known UK facility that burned uncontrollably for two days in 1957. While Mahaffey's subtext about nuclear power's overall safety likely won't sit well with the practice's many opponents, his abundant use of lively anecdotes and intriguing scientific tidbits makes this an educational page-turner. --Carl Hays

Review

"Mahaffey guides us through more than a century of atomic research, including misadventures with radioactive elixirs and long-forgotten accidents. The compelling tales unravel like slow-motion horror stories." (NATURE)

"From clueless hunters wandering into caves teeming with radon-222, to fervid dreams of nuclear jets, and reactors bucking like steeds unused to human contact, Mahaffey keeps things appropriately dramatic. Truly valuable." (Newsweek)

"Mahaffey employs his extensive knowledge of nuclear engineering to produce a volume that is by turns alarming, thought-provoking, humorous, and always fascinating." (Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW)

About the Author

James Mahaffey was a senior research scientist at the Georgia Tech Research Institute where he worked under contract for the Defense Nuclear Agency, the National Ground Intelligence Center, the Air Force Air Logistics Center, and Georgia Power Company. He is the author of *Atomic Awakening* and *Atomic Accidents* and lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

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