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Germany Is Burning Too Much Coal (bloomberg.com)

Posted by msmash on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:40PM from the closer-look dept. Several readers share a report: Germany is widely seen as a world leader in the fight against climate change. Thanks to its investments in renewable power, wind and solar energy provide a third of its electricity, more than double the U.S. share. Germany's goal to lower carbon-dioxide emissions 40 percent by 2020 is significantly more ambitious than that of Europe as a whole or the U.S. After the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, Chancellor Angela Merkel vowed even greater determination. "We can't wait for the last man on Earth to be convinced by the scientific evidence for climate change," she explained. But there's another, troubling side to the German story: The country still gets 40 percent of its energy from coal, a bigger share than most other European countries. And much of it is lignite, the dirtiest kind of coal. As a result, Germany is set to fall well short of its 2020 goal. This dependence on coal is partly a side effect of Germany's abandonment of emissions-free nuclear power and partly foot-dragging on the part of a government wary of alienating voters in German coal country. During the summer election campaign, Merkel largely avoided the subject.

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fucking krauts (Score:5, Insightful)

by Moaninopus on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:42PM (#55548835)

The emergency move away from nuclear has been incredibly short sighted. I understand not wanting to build new reactors, but especially with natural disasters in Germany, getting the same quality of lifestyle that we have today without burning as much coal is a no-brainer. Nuclear Energy. Yes it does pose many risks but so does burning coal, and the latter seems to be destroying our environment.

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Re: fucking krauts (Score:5, Insightful)

by atomicalgebra (4566883) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:56PM (#55548955)

Nuclear energy isn't unlimited. Neither is solar, but we can run our civilization for 10000's of years with nuclear. That makes is sustainable. If we include seawater extraction and thorium we can run our civilization for millions of years.

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Re: (Score:2)

by Type440 (1233630)

If we include seawater extraction and thorium we can run our civilization for millions of years. Reprocessing of spent fuel in combination with pebble-bed designs would go a long way...

Re: (Score:2)

by whoever57 (658626)

If we include seawater extraction and thorium we can run our civilization for millions of years. Have you seen the estimates for power usage in the distant future; [ucsd.edu] Thus in about 2500 years from now, we would be using a large galaxy's worth of energy

Re: (Score:2)

by OrangeTide (124937)

Nuclear is not an option only after you've converted all matter available to you into iron. We'll want viable fusion reactors built before we run out of fission materials that are easily mined on the surface. Something that will happen, but not likely in our lifetimes. And thankfully we've been working very hard on fusion reactor technology and we will continue to do so.

Re: (Score:2)

by HornWumpus (783565)

The NW of Germany is not a frozen empty flat shithole.

Re: (Score:2)

by Luthair (847766)

Unfortunately a lot of nuclear FUD is bankrolled by the coal industry pretending to be grass roots. This has been a big issue in the USA also.

Fucking Envirowackos (Score:2)

by sycodon (149926)

More likely the Envirowackos. Nuclear is expensive due to incessant lawsuits and an uncertain regulatory environment. How many other 5 year, billion dollar construction projects are subject to the rules being change on a whim?

Re: (Score:2)

by thegarbz (1787294)

Sorry but not even close. The nuclear FUD in Germany is well and truly a grass roots campaign led mostly by those who lived through the hysteria of Chernobyl. The world was largely comfortable with the idea of nuclear power maintaining the status quo right until the Japan incident. That started new fears of "if they can't even do it". No need for the coal industry to get involved. The actual protests on the ground and the driving force from the people in Germany who have no concept of risk management and jus

Re: (Score:2)

by Luthair (847766)

I can't speak to Germany, but definitely has been the case in the USA.
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Re: (Score:2)

by ctilsie242 (4841247)

The only reason I would have reservations when it comes to nuclear power is the fact that there is no real responsibility for safety. In the modern world of golden parachutes and "synergistic optimization", a company that makes a reactor head from zinc pot metal, causing an instant meltdown when the rods are placed, has no responsibility or worries. They got the contract funding, and worst, the company at fault gets a token fine while the government has a new Superfund site to deal with. If we can't even tr
1 hidden comment

Re: (Score:2)

by not flu (1169973)

If Merkel wanted to maintain quality of life for germans she wouldn't have let the country be overrun by migrants either, so we can safely rule that out as any kind of motivation for her actions.

Sounds like a Base Load Need (Score:5, Insightful)

by DatheDank (4580343) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:45PM (#55548869)

That 40% sounds like a required need for base load. I doubt they will be able to eliminate it without much wailing and gnashing of teeth from their utility engineers. They could have accomplished their goals by keeping those nuclear plants going. Shame they let feelings get in the way of good energy policy.
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Re: (Score:3)

by harperska (1376103)

That link doesn't 'disprove' the concept of peaking/base load grids. That concept is still sound and in fact how the US grid operated at least as of 2010 when I was last personally involved in the energy industry. It just makes physics sense that it is more efficient to run your big plants at a constant rate 24/7, and bring your smaller plants on and off line as demand fluctuates throughout the day. What it sounds like your link is arguing is that Germany was playing games by generating more base load th

But they signed a meaningless piece of paper! (Score:5, Insightful)

by CajunArson (4585943) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:46PM (#55548877) Journal

But not but.. they SAID all the right things and virtue signaled in the prescribed manner! It's great they completely dumped nuclear power though, because OMG RADEYAYSHUNS!!
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Re:But they signed a meaningless piece of paper! (Score:5, Insightful)

by grasshoppa (657393) <_gro.oc-ompt'_ta'_ydenneks'> on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:49PM (#55548905)

Homepage Not sure why you're being modded down, because you nailed it. For all their lofty goals, paranoia and empty gestures are all Germany has thus far achieved.
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Re: (Score:3)

by XXongo (3986865)

Not sure why you're being modded down, because you nailed it. Possibly -1 redundant, because he only repeated in sarcastic tones what the very first post wrote: "The emergency move away from nuclear has been incredibly short sighted." Nailed it.

Re: (Score:2)

by magarity (164372)

Not sure why you're being modded down

cause by misspelling a word using ALL CAPS in that way it becomes an ad hominem attack, which is a logical fallacy.

Re: (Score:3)

by [s122604 \(1018036\)](#)

And the US, despite having a major political party completely infected with the AGW denial lunacy has been doing well re: carbon

That's mostly due to having more methane than we know what to do with, but still...

The absolute best thing that could happen to the planet re: climate change (other than mass suicide I guess) would be massive, trillion dollar nuclear power plant construction campaigns carried out in Europe, North America, and Asia.

Even if we had another Chernobyl ever decade (and there is no reason)

Re: (Score:3)

by [JoshuaZ \(1134087\)](#)

Sigh. "Virtue signaling" is something that has real meaning. It doesn't just mean "does something that I don't like or don't sympathize with". Your sarcasm is essentially correct regarding nuclear power, and their turning off their nuclear plants was a terrible idea, but that doesn't mean the people here weren't sincere.

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Re: (Score:2)

by [grasshoppa \(657393\)](#)

There is a latency to bring more reactors online, that's true. However, many forms of renewables tend to be from unreliable sources (solar and wind largely), so any power grid dominated by these forms of energy will have to face this "flexibility" constraint anyway (likely through the deployment of batteries).

Meaning nuclear's lack of flexibility is an issue already addressed in the inherent design.

so let shutdown the factory's and jobs (Score:2)

by [Joe Dragon \(2206452\)](#)

so let shutdown the factory's and jobs. Years after that the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany will come up and make Germany be free of EU control.

Re: (Score:1)

by Anonymous Coward

Germany controls the EU, not the other way around.

Re: (Score:1)

by Anonymous Coward

So the word 'control' now means 'to pay for everything and to have remarkably little influence on policy for such a large country'? Interesting.

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Power Grid (Score:2)

by [FFOMelchior \(979131\)](#)

They're going to be screwed once they hit Step 3.

Meanwhile (Score:2, Insightful)

by Anonymous Coward

The only country not part of the Paris accord is set to meet their goal. Odd.

Energiewende is a failure (Score:5, Insightful)

by [atomicalgebra \(4566883\)](#) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @01:51PM (#55548931)

Germany has spent 100s of billions on renewables without much to show for it. Their electricity rates are among the highest in Europe, yet [they still pollute 10x as much as France!](#) [squarespace.com] If they spent that money on next generation nuclear their emissions would have dropped. As it currently stands nuclear power is the only viable option to mitigate climate change.

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Re:Energiewende is a failure (Score:4, Interesting)

by [HornWumpus \(783565\)](#) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @02:00PM (#55548989)

High electric rates are a greeny GOAL.

They aren't very smart, but their mistake is bad goals, not bad execution.

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Re: (Score:2)

by [atomicalgebra \(4566883\)](#)

High electric rates are a greeny GOAL.

You are right. Increasing electricity rates in a goal of the greenies. There is a belief that high electricity rates will decrease demand. In reality it impoverishes the lower and middle classes while doing nothing to lower CO2 emissions.

Re: (Score:2)

by [HornWumpus \(783565\)](#)

This ^^ is what greenies actually believe!

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Everyone wants to have it both ways. (Score:2)

by [OrangeTide \(124937\)](#)

Polluting the most when you're the main industrial nation of the region is hardly surprising. If Germany lowered their industrial base to that of Italy or Greece they'd also lower their carbon emissions too, but they'd have to import everything. All of Europe would need austerity measures to deal with the loss of the massive amount of capital that Germany injects into the EU economy.

Re: (Score:2)

by [atomicalgebra \(4566883\)](#)

France seems to be doing fine. Germany would not have to lower their industrial base if they opted to use nuclear.

Re: (Score:2)

by [WindBourne \(631190\)](#)

exactly.

In fact, ALL of the cleanest nations have some major form of a clean base-load power.

For Sweden, it is nuclear and hydro. For Costa Rica, it is geothermal, and hydro. For nations like Indonesia, geothermal will allow them to become clean.

BUT for large nations, that will not work.

Take China. Many ppl rave about their building wind and solar. Of course, in America, our wind and solar has an efficiency above 30%, with new tall towers going up around 60%. The reason is that we build these in sma

Re: (Score:1)

by [atomicalgebra \(4566883\)](#)

Within the next 5 years, you're likely to see their emissions drop, as the coal is becoming unnecessary.

Bullshit. Not to the level of France or Norway. Not in 5 years, not in 25 years.

They're not burning too much coal (Score:3)

by [Gregory Eschbacher \(2878609\)](#) on Tuesday November 14, 2017 @02:02PM (#55549005)

Correction to your headline: They're not burning too much coal, which makes it sound like they're wasting coal by burning too much. In fact, this is just the opposite. The amount of coal they're burning is the amount necessary to provide 40% of the electricity to their country. A more accurate headline would be "Despite their reputation as a leader in renewable energy, Germany is actually burning more coal than most other European countries".

Germany is running out of reliable sources of power generation: If not coal or nuclear, then natural gas would be a good choice. But do they have the political capital to switch from one fossil fuel to another?

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Re: (Score:3)

by [Luthair \(847766\)](#)

They're burning too much to meet their emissions goal....

Re: (Score:2)

by [HornWumpus \(783565\)](#)

Their gas mostly comes from Russia. They don't trust Putin.

As my cousins said about their rooftop solar, it doesn't really make financial sense (expecting rates to be trimmed before payback), but fuck the Russians.

A lot of them are switching to wood heat. Again largely because 'Fuck the Russians'.

What they don't have is the political will to tell the Greenies to fuck off and frack for gas of their own. They'll get their eventually, once the Saudi and Russian anti fracking propaganda spending tapers off

Re: (Score:2)

by [WindBourne \(631190\)](#)

LOL.

Germany imports a great deal more electricity from Poland and France, then they export.

So no, that is total BS.

Nuclear waste? (Score:1)

by Anonymous Coward

Anyone considered just throwing it off planet?

Turn it into glassy lumps and simply throw it off planet with a linear accelerator. Take some gravitational influences into account and you could even aim it at the sun. The sun wouldn't notice the whole planet falling into and we're just talking about a few thousand tons of radioactive waste. (wait until we hear the arguments about polluting the sun. :-)

Re: (Score:1)

by [HornWumpus \(783565\)](#)

GTF out moron. You're too stupid to be on /.

Seriously. Go away. Back to AOL chatrooms for you.

Re: (Score:2)

by [Rob Lister \(4174831\)](#)

Not all but most things considered nuclear waste isn't really waste. It remains very useful even if not presently. So they store where they can still get at it.

Re: (Score:2)

by [WindBourne \(631190\)](#)

Nope. Horrible wasteful. Far better for us to use it all up so that only about 10-20% remains and it is safe in 200 years. In fact, those can simply be buried in yucca mountain or even slowly released in a molten volcano and allowed to be diluted.

Leadership needed (Score:1)

by [DNS-and-BIND \(461968\)](#)

Ever since Trump pulled America out of the Paris accords, Merkel has been regarded as leader of the free world.

She was going to make a relationship with China, and the Americans could go to the devil. So, I am just rather impatiently waiting for her to do her duty as world leader. Do the things she always criticized the Americans for not doing: following through with actions, not just empty words. Is our world leader going to show us how it's done and lead by example, or do a worse job than the Americans?

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Re: (Score:3)

by [RightwingNutjob \(1302813\)](#)

Leadership requires honesty. The brutal sort that doesn't give you the warm-and-fuzzies when it tells you that no, we won't be driving electric cars on the moon by decade's end but will in fact be drilling oil and mining coal and driving gas-guzzlers for decades to come because whatever man-made global warming there might actually be is the price of having the lights go on when you flip the switch and being able to exercise your right to freedom of movement.

No amount of feel-good nonsense, no amount of pr

Re: (Score:2)

by [WindBourne \(631190\)](#)

yeah, whatever.

Leftist retards (Score:1)

by Anonymous Coward

Treaty-excited results-ignorant know-nothings.

Says who? (Score:1)

by [micahraleigh \(2600457\)](#)

The article seems to say we should rush out there and stop the Germans because of something that got tossed up on \.

Based on something that was "widely seen".

In other words "they say" Germany should do something.

Or "the Public" thinks ...

The Public is not a real entity. It's just a lurid abstraction of our worst cravings. I'm not sure slashdot is very reliable either.

This is just a bunch of weasel words.

- **Yup, not surprising. (Score:2)**
by [WindBourne \(631190 \)](#)

The funny thing is that many continue to rip on America and then compare to Germany and China. Yet, both Germany and China have high % of their electricity from coal. Germany is 45% and rising, and CHina's is around 80% (they refuse to allow external monitoring and their numbers change constantly). In fact, Germany has 45% coal, and 10% nat gas/mineral oil. Germany's electricity is not only more CO2 / KWh than is America's, but is much dirtier since the majority of theirs comes from Coal and NOT nat gas.

- **Fossil fuels (Score:1)**
by [benjfwler \(239527 \)](#)
Germany's heavy dependence on fossil fuels is an major problem now that Russia's shown their true their colours, and is attacking and undermining the West on all fronts. Further abuse and humiliation from the Russian side is now more likely, since Putin did his (plagiarised) PhD on how to wield the oil weapon. Far from understanding all this, Merkel then decided it would be a good idea to transition away from nuclear. Guess what fills the gap? Fossil fuels -- controlled by the strong adversary (Russia) and

- **"voters in German coal country" aren't many (Score:2)**
by [ffkom \(3519199 \)](#)
I see two very wrong assumptions in the article and in this forum:

* Coal still being used because of "voters in German coal country". Sorry, but those are way too few to concern the political parties in Berlin. The times when a considerable amount of jobs actually dependet on coal mining are long gone. Today the work ist done by heavy machinery, observed by very few humans in the process.

* So much coal being burnt to fulfill baseline needs. Nope: Germany currently exports lots of electric energy into ne

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