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WRIGHT**

NUCLEAR MYTH:

*“Nuclear
cooling towers
emit smoke.”*

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REALITY:

The steam emitted from nuclear cooling towers is a by-product of the power generation process. This steam is not radioactive, and it contains no pollutants – it simply helps to cool the plant.

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FAST FACTS ABOUT NUCLEAR:

Cooling Towers in Nuclear Power

Though they are not used exclusively by nuclear power plants, cooling towers are one of the images most commonly associated with nuclear power. These large, cylindrical structures can often be seen emitting a white “cloud” that can look like smoke. However, this white substance is actually just steam that is a by-product of the power generation process. This steam is not radioactive, and it contains no pollutants – it simply helps to cool the plant.

Cooling towers come in 2 types: natural draft and mechanical draft. In natural draft cooling towers, air flow comes from the pressure difference created by the tower’s hyperbolic shape. By contrast, mechanical draft towers use fans to force or draw the steam through the tower. So why don’t all plants have cooling towers? In areas where water is more abundant, the water is often returned back into the environment after being slightly cooled through the system; some plants, like the Harris Plant in North Carolina, even have their own man-made water sources!