

# Catawba Nuclear Station Fact Sheet



## Catawba Quick Facts

**Groundbreaking:** 1974

**Commercial operation:**

Unit 1 – 1985

Unit 2 – 1986

**Number of units:** 2

**Reactor type:** Pressurized water reactor (PWR)

**Station capacity:** 2,370 megawatts, enough to power 1.4 million average homes

## General Information

Catawba Nuclear Station is located on Lake Wylie in York County, S.C.

Catawba station personnel remain committed to operating the units safely, reliably and maintaining a good relationship with the community.

- Lake Wylie is the oldest lake on the Catawba River and provides cooling water for Catawba Nuclear Station and Allen Steam Station.
- Issued a 20-year extension on its license by the NRC (all U.S. reactors were initially licensed for 40 years).
- Catawba Nuclear Station is jointly owned by North Carolina Municipal Power Agency Number One, North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation, Piedmont Municipal Power Agency and Duke Energy.

## Nuclear Safety

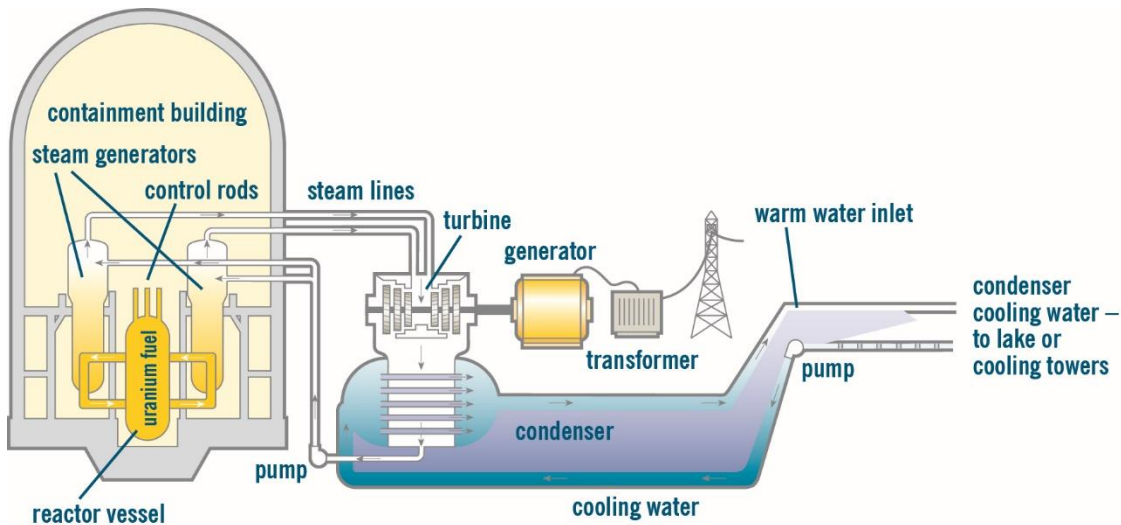
- Nuclear stations have multiple, robust safety barriers in place.
- Each containment building housing the nuclear fuel core is made of concrete 3 feet thick with a 3/4 inch-thick steel liner.
- The reactor vessels containing the nuclear fuel are 44 feet tall, 14 feet in diameter and constructed of 8 5/8-inch-thick steel.
- Each unit has redundant safety systems such as multiple pumps and backup electrical supply systems.
- Nuclear stations are built to withstand a variety of external forces, including hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods and earthquakes.
- Duke Energy works closely with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), various federal agencies, state agencies and local governments to maintain emergency response plans that ensure close coordination with these groups.

## Nuclear Security

- Nuclear stations have numerous security features, seen and unseen.
- Armed, highly-trained security professionals provide 24-hour protection.
- Physical barriers and electronic surveillance systems surround Catawba.
- Access is tightly controlled and nuclear employees must pass strict background, psychological and drug/alcohol screenings.

## Radiation

- Radiation is a natural part of our environment.
- We receive radiation from the sun, minerals in the earth, food, etc.
- The amount of radiation from a nuclear plant is less than a passenger receives during a coast-to-coast flight.



## Nuclear Fundamentals

Catawba Nuclear Station uses uranium as its fuel. Each uranium pellet, less than one inch long, is enclosed in metal rods 12 feet tall. There are 272 pellets per rod, 264 fuel rods in a fuel assembly and 193 fuel bundles in each of the two reactor cores.

In a process called nuclear fission, a source emitting free neutrons is inserted into the uranium fuel core. The uranium fuel absorbs these free neutrons, becomes less stable and releases additional free neutrons. This movement of free neutrons creates heat used to generate electricity. Here is how it works:

- Water circulates through the nuclear core reaching 600 degrees by removing heat from the fission process.
- Neutron absorbing control rods are lowered into the fuel core to slow or stop this process.
- This heated water travels to large steam generators or “heat exchangers.”

- This 600-degree water flows through thousands of tubes inside the steam generators while cooler water circulates on the outside of these tubes and becomes steam.
- The steam flows to a turbine and spins large blades attached to a shaft and generator, producing electricity.
- This steam then flows across a set of tubes containing cool lake water that condenses the steam for reuse in the steam generators.
- This lake water flows to mechanical cooling towers, cooled and returned to the condenser system.

## Conserving Resources

Because nuclear power plants do not burn fuel, they produce no greenhouse gas emissions while generating electricity. In fact, more than half of America’s carbon-free electricity comes from nuclear energy.