



NATIONAL

Three Mile Island nuclear plant will reopen to power Microsoft data centers

SEPTEMBER 20, 2024 · 1:40 PM ET

By C Mandler



The Three Mile Island nuclear plant is seen in March 2011 in Middletown, Pa.

Jeff Fusco/Getty Images

Three Mile Island, the power plant near Middletown, Pa., that was the scene of the worst commercial nuclear accident in U.S. history, will reopen to power Microsoft's data centers, which are responsible for powering the tech giant's cloud computing and artificial intelligence programs.

Constellation Energy, which bills itself as America's largest producer of "clean, carbon-free energy," announced Friday that it had signed its largest-ever power

purchase agreement with Microsoft.



CLIMATE

Data centers, backbone of the digital economy, face water scarcity and climate risk

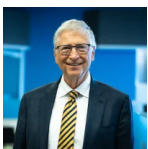
“Powering industries critical to our nation’s global economic and technological competitiveness, including data centers, requires an abundance of energy that is carbon-free and reliable every hour of every day, and nuclear plants are the only energy sources that can consistently deliver on that promise,” said Joe Dominguez, Constellation Energy's president and CEO.

The deal will create approximately 3,400 jobs and bring in more than \$3 billion in state and federal taxes, according to the company. It also said the agreement will add \$16 billion to Pennsylvania's GDP.

Sponsor Message



The agreement will span 20 years, and the plant is expected to reopen in 2028. It will be renamed the Crane Clean Energy Center in honor of Chris Crane, who died in April and served as the CEO of Constellation’s former parent company.



ENERGY

Bill Gates is going nuclear: How his latest project could power U.S. homes and AI

“Pennsylvania’s nuclear energy industry plays a critical role in providing safe, reliable, carbon-free electricity that helps reduce emissions and grow Pennsylvania’s economy,” Gov. Josh Shapiro said.

Unlike power plants using fossil fuels, like coal or natural gas, nuclear plants do not directly release carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gas emissions driving global warming.

The partial nuclear reactor meltdown at Three Mile Island happened on March 28, 1979, when one of the plant's two reactors' cooling mechanisms malfunctioned. The reactor that will be reopened to power Microsoft's data centers was not involved in the accident.



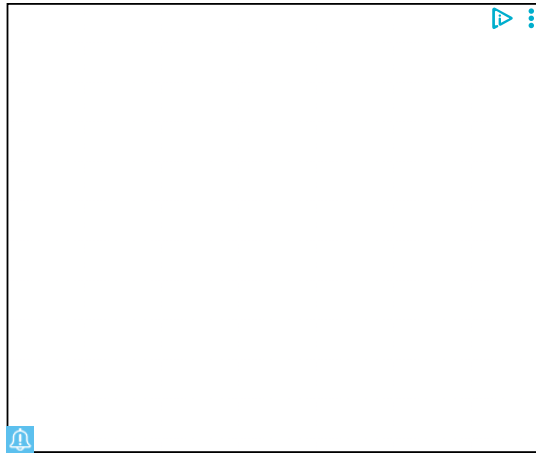
Steam rises out of the nuclear plant on Three Mile Island in Middletown, Pa., on March 26, 2019.

Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images

"Before it was prematurely shuttered due to poor economics, this plant was among the safest and most reliable nuclear plants on the grid, and we look forward to bringing it back with a new name and a renewed mission to serve as an economic engine for Pennsylvania," Dominguez said.

However, some state activists are worried that taxpayers would foot the bill for the plant's reopening, StateImpact Pennsylvania reported.

Sponsor Message



ENERGY

Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant Shuts Down

“What would be a better investment for our money? That’s the question we should be asking. We were told: let the marketplace decide. The market decided, and they decided it’s not nuclear,” said Eric Epstein of the watchdog group Three Mile Island Alert.

Three Mile Island's working reactor was shut down in 2019, after a legislative effort to bail out the plant failed when it could not keep up with demand for other cheaper energy sources.

Former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates invested \$1 billion in a nuclear power plant that broke ground in Kemmerer, Wyo., in June. The plant will power homes and AI, Gates told NPR's Steve Inskeep.

Editor's note: Constellation Energy and Microsoft are among NPR's recent financial supporters.

NPR does not offer or accept money for coverage or interviews.

Anyone who makes such an offer or request is not an NPR employee and does not represent NPR.

three mile island microsoft nuclear power artificial intelligence



Reporting for the public, funded by the public.

The NPR Network is free from special interests and political influence. We deliver the facts — because you deserve to know.

With you by our side, we are building what comes next. Can you fuel this public service today?

\$520K raised

Progress rate: 52%

Target: \$1M

DONATE NOW →

Your support is needed.

More Stories From NPR



NEWS

Trump administration pushes to remove tax exemption for private colleges with DEI policies



3 years on, Israelis grapple with reports Netanyahu was warned before Oct. 7 attacks



ENVIRONMENT

Trump administration moves to open untouched national forests to logging

THE INDICATOR FROM PLANET MONEY

One economist's answer to data center anxiety : The Indicator from Planet Money

RACE

Over 1,000 children are buried at juvenile detention centers nationwide

EDUCATION

5 things civil rights data says about public schools

Sponsor Message

Popular on NPR.org



ONLY ON NPR

3 years on, Israelis grapple with reports Netanyahu was warned before Oct. 7 attacks



HEALTH REPORTING IN THE STATES

What happened during Christa Pike's failed execution



YOUR MONEY

Here's the latest sticker shock: Borrowing for a mortgage -- or a car



THE INDICATOR FROM PLANET MONEY

Inside Norway's sovereign wealth fund dilemma to divest from Israel



PLANET MONEY

Where all those weird new drinks are coming from



THE INDICATOR FROM PLANET MONEY

New college degrees designed to job-proof graduates

NPR Editors' Picks



RESEARCH NEWS

Gut microbes followed migrating humans across continents, new study suggests



FAR-FLUNG POSTCARDS

Greetings from Lahore, Pakistan, whose high court offers an oasis for chatter and chai



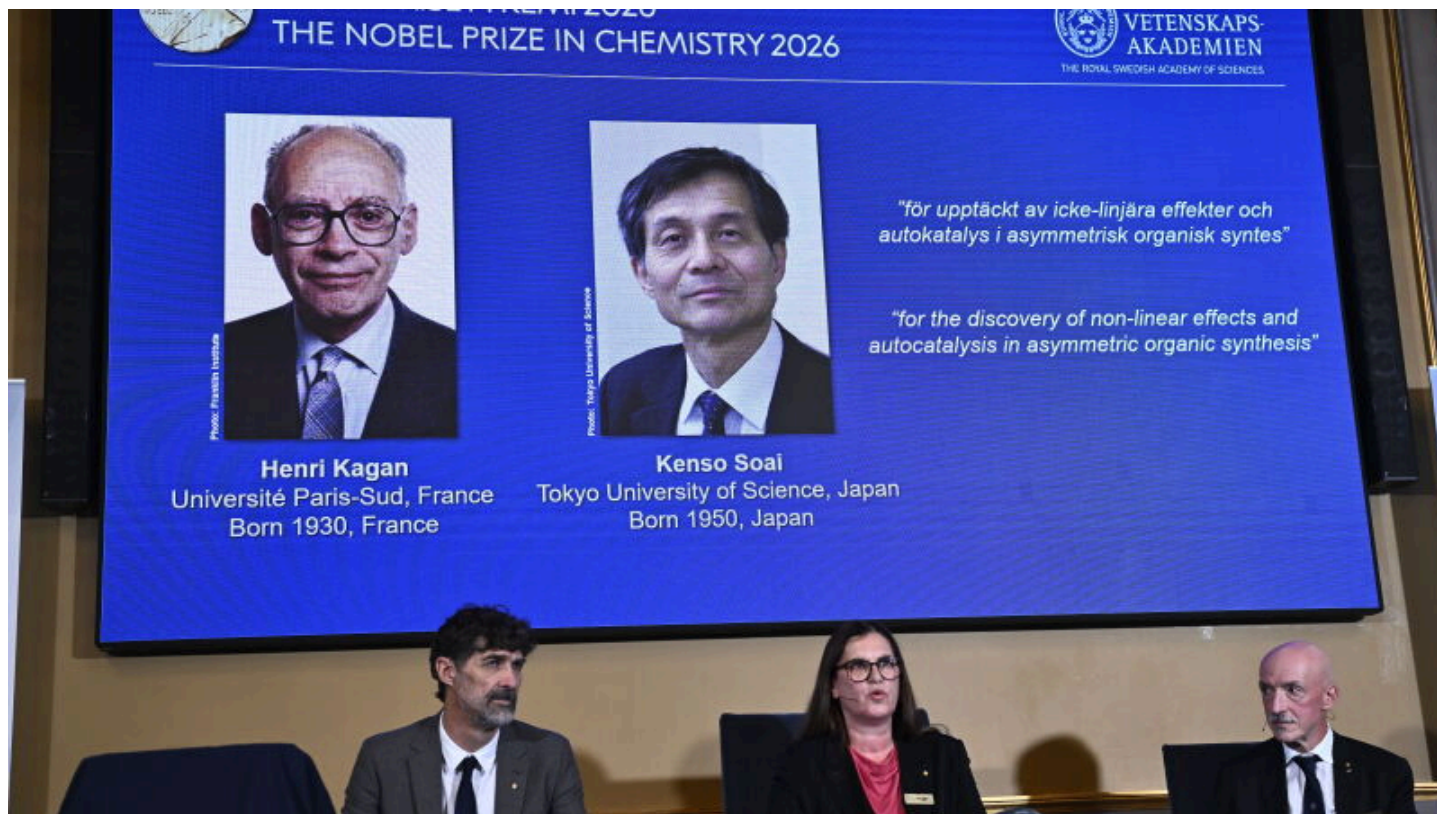
GLOBAL HEALTH

DIY fertilizer is a blessing as farmers face steep prices due to the Iran war



PLANET MONEY NEWSLETTER

Who will win the 2026 Nobel Prize in economics?



SCIENCE

Henri B. Kagan and Kenso Soai win Nobel Prize in chemistry



HEALTH

An early flu season means it might be time to think about a flu shot

READ & LISTEN

CONNECT

Home

News

Culture

Music

Podcasts & Shows

Newsletters

Facebook

Instagram

Press

Public Editor

Corrections

Transcripts

Contact & Help

ABOUT NPR

Overview

Diversity

NPR Network

Accessibility

Ethics

Finances

GET INVOLVED

Support Public Radio

Sponsor NPR

NPR Careers

NPR Shop

NPR Extra

[terms of use](#)

[privacy](#)

[your privacy choices](#)

[text only](#)

© 2026 npr