

NATIONAL

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

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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.

“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



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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.

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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.

“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.



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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.

“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.



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Island Nuclear
Power Plant
Shuts Down**

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.

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