

Germany sets weekend record for solar power

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Image: Array Technologies

(Phys.org) -- Solar power plants in Germany have set a new record. "Never before anywhere has a country produced as much photovoltaic electricity," said Norbert Allnoch, Germany's director of the Institute of the Renewable Energy Industry in Muenster. The plants peaked at 22 gigawatts of output for a few hours over the weekend, on Friday and Saturday. The numbers are important in that they yielded almost half the country's energy mid-day electricity needs. The 22 gigawatts is up from 14 GW a year ago. Also, this 22 gigawatts of output is equal to about 20 nuclear plants.

That comparison is significant because, in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, [Germany](#) abandoned nuclear energy endeavors. They shut down eight plants in favor of safer options and instead

shouldered the task of further developing renewable energy sources. Allnoch said the data is based on information from the European Energy Exchange (EEX), based in Leipzig.

Germany aggressively supports alternative energy sources and, by the year 2022, Germany expects to shutter its remaining nine nuclear [power](#) plants. The lack of these nuclear power facilities will create a gap in the country's energy infrastructure, however. Germany is looking toward sources such as solar, wind and biomass.

That support and commitment have come at a price. A 2012 Environment Ministry report showed that German taxpayers pay an extra four billion euros per year on top of their electricity bills to support solar power.

Allnoch and his supporters would prefer to look at the “price” context in another way. “Even with all the safety precautions”, he said, there is still a risk at nuclear plants. “A global phaseout would be ideal but is not likely to happen soon.”

As for costs, he said that while everyone worries about costs, the markets are shifting. He said once the uncertainty calms down, “we will see that we can do without nuclear power.”

In relegating nuclear energy to the past, the road to replace it may be rocky, he added, but it is do-able. “We need to rise to this challenge.”

The new record-breaking figures from Germany, however, do not quiet some [energy](#) experts who stress that without good storage strategies for excess power, such record-breaking numbers are not meaningful. They say the real point is to get consistently large percentages of power from renewable sources.

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