The green Hornet on Energy

When it comes right down to it, almost everything in the universe revolves around energy in some fashion. For our purposes, the accepted physics definition is 'the capacity to do work'. We could also endeavor to define 'work' too but why don't we just say it's the stuff you don't want to do. So we need energy to power our tools; tools of every variety, from dishwashers to foot massagers. We also need energy, we can call it available power too- I think that's ok, to heat our food, ourselves and to light our way; the most base process for this is rubbing some materials together briskly and long enough to create heat and a glow. We also use the power to cool our food and ourselves except the base process to that is a little vague; it's unclear how you would generate cool by not rubbing two sticks together.

Right now fossil fuels are the order of the day and those consist mostly of coal and oil. However, there are ventures into alternatives like natural gas, bio-mass and renewables like wind, solar and geothermal. The oil mostly runs our vehicles and the coal mostly runs our power plants to generate electricity to power those tools. Of course the hot topic of the day is global warming/climate change and the demonizing of the use of fossil fuels because the resultant CO2 emissions that have been classified as a "greenhouse gas".

There is another alternative fuel source called nuclear. Nuclear has gotten a bad reputation amongst some people and environmentalists. Nuclear plants can blow up if mistakes are made, and spew all sorts of radioactive matter all over; Chernobyl was a big event and Three Mile Island was a smaller event. There is also the nuclear toxic waste to contend with and that makes this particular energy solution doubly concerning.

But actually there is something wrong with every energy source. For fossil fuels, it's the waste (emissions and other) and the ordeal of having to 'harvest', mine, or otherwise extract it from the earth and then process the materials. For the renewables, it's the inconsistency of supply and the necessary ubiquity of the unsightly generating equipment; big windmills and arrays of solar panels. Although some may think that the equipment has an unnatural, orderly aesthetic appeal to it.

Nuclear though, other than the highly toxic waste and that possible blowing up issue, seems to be fairly efficient with materials. But have you ever thought about how nuclear energy works in a power station context? As romantic and mysterious as it sounds, the nuclear energy heats water. Who would have thought, with all this hi-tech knowledge and equipment we're doing nothing more than what people from the Stone Age did. So a nuclear power plant is a gigantic radioactive teapot; conceptually, maybe it's a little disappointing. The water is heated, converted to steam and the steam turns really big turbines that generate electricity to power our tools. It might also be noted that coal fired power plants also heat water and generate steam; Thomas Newcomen and James Watt would be proud, or horrified.

What we need are appliances that run directly off of nuclear energy. Since transmission of the nuclear power might present some sort of obstacle, each house could have its own

tiny reactor; that would solve everything. Consumer warning labels would eliminate the possibility of misuse and ensuing explosions and you could put your radioactive waste out for your regular trash pickup; what could be simpler? Maybe the Green Hornet should also look into that technology that's going to solve our transportation problems by allowing your car to run on water; it's all over the internet and for only $49.95 (just google "run your car on water").

So we'd better keep recycling and working on that alternative fuel source; what we need are fresh, creative new ideas, like the Ronco Reactormatic mentioned above.