

Email Assignment

What you're doing: First, read the attached news story, which was forwarded by email to the Department of News Literacy by a former student. After you read the story, consider whether you should pass this story on to a friend of yours, who you know is a big fan of this celebrity.

Before deciding whether to forwarding this story, how can you determine the accuracy of this story? Go online and try to verify that this information is reliable. Write down the step-by-step approach that you took to ascertain the reliability this story. Make sure you explain in detail the exact steps that you took to verify this information and how you came to form your judgement. Then, decide whether you want to forward this to your friend or not, and explain your decision.

Why you're doing this: In lecture, we talked about how information on the internet can be spread rapidly from person to person via online communication, such as email or social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. This assignment is asking you to consider what steps you take to verify the news you find on the internet.

What you should aim to get out of it: Do you take the time to critically assess the information that you receive over the internet? How do you know what sources of information to trust? What can you do to verify information that you receive? This assignment asks you to wrestle with these questions. You should come out of this assignment with a greater self-knowledge of how you form your assessment of information you find online. A great job that shows considerable introspection about your own habits and thought patterns as your surf the net will earn 4 points.

Choice #1 (False)

The first case of the common cold was diagnosed in 1611 in Stratford, England. The patient? John Common, who coincidentally gave his cold to William Shakespeare who said the new malady exacerbated his lovesickness, thereby inspiring several of his most fondly remembered sonnets.

Choice #2 (False)

I recently had a neighbor who had to have their 5-year old German Shepherd dog put down due to liver failure. The dog was completely healthy until a few weeks ago, so they had a necropsy done to see what the cause was. The liver levels were unbelievable, as if the dog had ingested poison of some kind. The dog is kept inside, and when he's outside, someone's with him, so the idea of him getting into something unknown was hard to believe. My neighbor started going through all the items in the house. When he got to the Swiffer Wetjet, he noticed, in very tiny print, a warning which stated "may be harmful to small

children and animals." He called the company to ask what the contents of the cleaning agent are and was astounded to find out that antifreeze is one of the ingredients. (actually he was told it's a compound which is one molecule away from anitfreeze).

Therefore, just by the dog walking on the floor cleaned with the solution, then licking it's own paws, and the dog eating from its dishes which were kept on the kitchen floor cleaned with this product, it ingested enough of the solution to destroy its liver.

Soon after his dog's death, his housekeepers' two cats also died of liver failure. They both used the Swiffer Wetjet for quick cleanups on their floors. Necropsies weren't done on the cats, so they couldn't file a lawsuit, but he asked that we spread the word to as many people as possible so they don't lose their animals.

Choice #3 (True)

Coal Ash Is More Radioactive than Nuclear Waste

By burning away all the pesky carbon and other impurities, coal power plants produce heaps of radiation

By [Mara Hvistendahl](#) , Scientific American Magazine | December 13, 2007 | 112



CONCENTRATED RADIATION: By burning coal into ash, power plants concentrate the trace amounts of radioactive elements within the black rock. *Image: ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM*

The popular conception of [nuclear power](#) is straight out of *The Simpsons*: Springfield abounds with signs of radioactivity, from the strange glow surrounding Mr. Burns' nuclear power plant workers to Homer's low sperm count. Then there's the local superhero, Radioactive Man, who fires beams of "nuclear heat" from his eyes. Nuclear power, many people think, is inseparable from a volatile, invariably lime-green, mutant-making radioactivity.

Coal, meanwhile, is believed responsible for a host of more quotidian problems, such as mining accidents, acid rain and [greenhouse gas emissions](#). But it isn't supposed to spawn three-eyed fish like Blinky.

Over the past few decades, however, a series of studies has called these stereotypes into question. Among the surprising conclusions: the waste produced by coal [plants](#) is actually more radioactive than that generated by their nuclear counterparts. In fact, the fly ash emitted by a power plant—a by-product from burning coal for electricity—carries into the surrounding environment 100 times more radiation than a nuclear power plant producing the same amount of energy. * [*See Editor's Note at end of [page 2](#)*]

At issue is coal's content of uranium and thorium, both radioactive elements. They occur in such trace amounts in natural, or "whole," coal that they aren't a problem. But when coal is burned into fly ash, uranium and thorium are concentrated at up to 10 times their original levels.

Fly ash uranium sometimes leaches into the soil and [water](#) surrounding a coal plant, affecting cropland and, in turn, food. People living within a "stack shadow"—the area within a half- to one-mile (0.8- to 1.6-kilometer) radius of a coal plant's smokestacks—might then ingest small amounts of radiation. Fly ash is also disposed of in landfills and abandoned mines and quarries, posing a potential risk to people living around those areas. In a 1978 paper for *Science*, J. P. McBride at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) and his colleagues looked at the uranium and thorium content of fly ash from coal-fired power plants in Tennessee and Alabama. To answer the question of just how harmful leaching could be, the scientists estimated radiation exposure around the coal plants and compared it with exposure levels around boiling-water reactor and pressurized-water nuclear power plants.

The result: estimated radiation doses ingested by people living near the coal plants were equal to or higher than doses for people living around the nuclear facilities. At one extreme, the scientists estimated fly ash radiation in individuals' bones at around 18 millirems (thousandths of a rem, a unit for measuring doses of ionizing radiation) a year. Doses for the two nuclear plants, by contrast, ranged from between three and six millirems for the same period. And when all food was grown in the area, radiation doses were 50 to 200 percent higher around the coal plants.

McBride and his co-authors estimated that individuals living near coal-fired installations are exposed to a maximum of 1.9 millirems of fly ash radiation yearly. To put these numbers in perspective, the average person encounters 360 millirems of annual "background radiation" from natural and man-made sources, including substances in Earth's crust, cosmic rays, residue from nuclear tests and smoke detectors.

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Actor Jim Carey hospitalized after traffic altercation



BREAKING NEWS - STILL DEVELOPING...

Fullerton, CA (MediaFetcher April 10, 2011) - Actor Jim Carey has been reported to be in serious condition and taken to Golden State Regional Hospital after a minor traffic accident that escalated into a physical altercation in Fullerton CA, a suburb 30 minutes south east of Los Angeles.

Witness reports indicate that Jim Carey's BMW struck a pickup truck towing landscaping equipment. Three men exited the truck and extracted him from the vehicle then began kicking and punching the actor before fleeing the scene.

"He didn't have a chance against these men who attacked him before he said a single word to them", replied a visibly shaken onlooker.

Jim Carey was unresponsive upon the arrival of police officers and EMT's, but appeared to be breathing according to eyewitness reports.



This story is developing as we await confirmation regarding the eyewitness details and official health status.

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