

A Particle That Outruns Light in Water: Cherenkov Radiation

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Look at a photo of a research pool in which a nuclear reactor sits underwater, and you can see the whole pool glowing with a mysterious blue light. No lamps have been switched on and no dye has been added to the water, yet the area around the reactor core is tinged blue as if it were giving off light on its own. This light is “Cherenkov Radiation.” Cherenkov radiation is the light that spreads out in the shape of a cone when a charged particle moves through a material such as water or glass faster than light travels in that material. In this article, we will look in turn at how Cherenkov radia