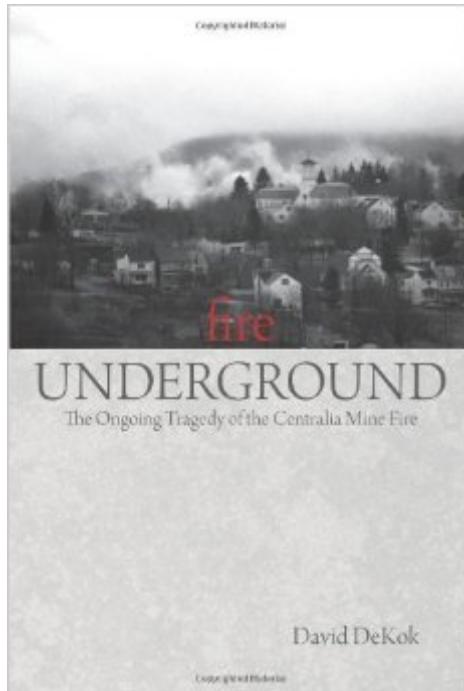


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# Fire Underground: The Ongoing Tragedy Of The Centralia Mine Fire



## Synopsis

How a modern-day mine disaster has turned a Pennsylvania community into a ghost town \* For much of its history, Centralia, Pennsylvania, had a population of around 2,000. By 1981, this had dwindled to just over 1,000â •not unusual for a onetime mining town. But as of 2007, Centralia had the unwelcome distinction of being the stateâ ™s tiniest municipality, with a population of nine. The reason: an underground fire that began in 1962 has decimated the town with smoke and toxic gases, and has since made history. *Fire Underground* is the completely updated classic account of the fire that has been raging under Centralia for decades. David DeKok tells the story of how the fire actually began and how government officials failed to take effective action. By 1981 the fire was spewing deadly gases into homes. A twelve-year-old boy dropped into a steaming hole as a congressman toured nearby. DeKok describes how the people of Centralia banded together to finally win relocation fundsâ •and he reveals what has happened to the few remaining residents as the fiftieth anniversary of the fireâ ™s beginning nears.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Centralia, in Eastern Pennsylvania's anthracite coal belt, was a community in gentle decline but not in decay. Although the town population had decreased over sixty percent between 1890 and 1980, it is remembered fondly by practically all who lived in it -- even though practically all who lived in it have had to leave it. An innocuous fire started in the spring of 1962 in order to convert a town dump into a sanitary landfill went underground, flamed out of hand, was not contained in time, and eventually erased the town from modern maps. What's left now are ten or so dwellers who have been fighting eminent domain evacuation orders for more than ten years, and the empty residential plats and cracked, smoke-spewing thoroughfares of one of America's newest ghost towns and its most unusual post-industrial relic. The story of how this once-proud community was consumed by the fire from beneath after 25-plus years of abortive containment by complacent government, dithering bureaucrats and a wayward faith in experimental technology is beautifully contained in this book, FIRE UNDERGROUND, by long-time observer and journalist David DeKok. This book has a high "can't-put-it-down" quotient and makes fascinating reading for anyone who's looking for insight into American industrial history, the social history of a Pennsylvania mining town, or a highly cautionary tale of how multiple levels of government, with the best of professed intentions, first overlooked and then undercut any feasible attempt to save the doomed community. What went wrong? Practically everything. Solutions for containing, abating or snuffing out the mine fire always seemed to be a matter of "too little, too late" despite escalating budgets and a (belated) national focus on the tragedy.

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