



More Power Plants Going Out of Service Due to New Regulations Set by EPA

New EPA pollution control regulations were set as part of an updated order to protect people from harmful pollutants caused by coal-fired power plants. Aging coal power plants are the largest remaining source of several toxic air pollutants, including mercury, arsenic, cyanide, and a range of other dangerous pollutants. These power plants are responsible for half of the mercury and over 75 percent of the acid gas emissions in the US.¹

According to an Associated Press survey, the new regulations set in December require 32 aging coal-fired power plants to shut down during the 2014-2015 period, along with an additional 36 that might also have to shut down, mostly due to the fact that pollution remediation and retrofitting are not cost-effective². Plants will have three years to install controls curbing the release of toxic materials when electricity is produced from burning coal.

Scott Segal, a lobbyist representing operators of coal-fired plants, stated that the “rules will impose significant costs on consumers and on industries that depend on affordable and reliable power to remain competitive.”³ Other arguments against shutting down these coal-fired plants include the loss of property taxes for local government, as well as residents who depend on plants for job security. While there may be opposition to the new regulations, the closing of these plants is an opportunity for cities to broaden their scope of renewable energy and alternate revenue sources.

The White House issued a Presidential Memorandum, along with the regulations, to clarify that the new standards must be implemented in a way that does not jeopardize electric reliability, and gives a fourth year to companies that can provide a well-defined pathway to comply with and install today’s clean energy and new technology standards.

Lisa Jackson , EPA Administrator stated that “The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards will protect millions of families and children from harmful and costly air pollution and provide the American people with health benefits that far outweigh the costs of compliance.”

The bottom line is that for every coal-fired plant taken out of service, there is an opportunity to provide clean wind power to support our nation’s health and renewable energy goals.

¹ EPA News Releases from Headquarters. December 21, 2011.

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceac8525735900400c27/bd8b3f37edf5716d8525796d005dd086!OpenDocument>

² Associated Press. Dina Cappiello. December 19, 2011. “New EPA rules threatening aging power plants.”

³ Bloomberg News. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-12-19/epa-final-rule-for-coal-plants-deemed-unfortunate-by-industry.html>