

The Untold Story

America's improving air quality is an untold success story according to Dr. Joel Schwartz with the Institute for Energy Research. One of the primary factors causing this improvement is the reduction of emissions due to the new technology of coal-fired power plants. Another factor was that Congress passed the Clean Air Act Amendment of 1970 which regulated six criteria pollutants. The six criteria pollutants are: 1) carbon monoxide; 2) lead; 3) sulfur dioxide; 4) nitrogen oxide; 5) ground-level ozone and 6) particulate matter.

Two of these pollutants sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide were the primary culprits of "acid rain". Between 1970 and 2006 sulfur dioxide emission were reduced by 40 percent and nitrogen oxide was reduced by 50 percent while the generation of electricity from coal-fired power plants had almost doubled.

Almost half of the electricity today is generated from coal-fired power plants. States like Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming are 80-98 percent dependent on coal for their electricity.

Since the Clean Air Act Amendment was passed in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency has issued more stringent standards. The most recent standards are called New Source Performance Standards and took effect on any new construction built after Feb. 28, 2005. Today, new available technologies for coal-fired power plants has reduced emissions of sulfur dioxide by 80 percent and



nitrogen oxide has been reduced by more than 70 percent according to the Energy Information Administration.

The Prairie State power plant is the largest coal-fired power plant under construction in the United States. The 1,600-megawatt power plant in Lively Grove, Ill. will come on line in 2011 and 2012. This will be the source of approximately two-thirds of Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative's base load. When completed, this power plant will deliver electricity to 2.4 million homes in nine states and provide 500 permanent jobs.

The really good news is the emissions from this coal-fired power plant will meet 2018 EPA standards for air quality. The sulfur dioxide emissions

will be 98 percent less; nitrogen oxide will be 86 percent less; particulate matter will be 99.8 percent less and carbon dioxide will be 15 percent less than coal-fired power plants operating in 1970.

In spite of this good news there are those who would like to see electricity generated from coal-fired power plants end. Their reasoning is that coal is dirty and causes respiratory problems. That may have been true when the power plant stacks belched dark brown smoke. But today there is a white plume of water vapor being emitted from the power plant's stack. Any emissions that the EPA felt hazardous has been regulated and reduced to levels that pose no health risks.

The United States has over 250 years of coal available at the present rate of consumption. With new technologies being developed, coal will continue to be a reliable source for power. For more information on the Prairie State Energy Campus go to www.prairiestateenergycampus.com.

Today, Congress is debating reducing carbon dioxide emissions. According to some economists this could cost the average family \$3,900 per year. Plant biologists know increasing carbon dioxide increases crop production. Climatologists know that the world has experienced much warmer climates in the past without flooding the world's coasts. And that's another untold story.

This information was brought to you by Eastern Illini, a Touchstone Energy cooperative and your connection to energy wise living.



Eastern Illini
Electric
Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 