



12. **NUCLEAR:** Energy company plays carbon card to promote plant

(02/03/2011)

A south Texas power facility is trying to sway Austin residents in the direction of nuclear, on the premise that it produces cleaner electricity than coal.

"We know that [Austin is] focused on reducing the city's carbon footprint and keeping rates low, and we believe we can develop an effective proposal to accomplish both goals," states the proposal outline from NRG Energy Inc.

Last year, the city passed a plan to focus on sourcing its electricity from renewables. The initiative did not consider nuclear power as a renewable form of energy.

City officials rejected nuclear power initiatives twice in the past five years, citing cost overruns as a concern. NRG says its plan is set up to avoid this.

However, critics say that the move would do nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as NRG would simply sell Austin's share of coal energy and the plant would continue to operate. In addition, the estimated rate for nuclear energy would be about 8 cents per kilowatt-hour -- more than double what the city pays for the coal-generated electricity, and greater than wind and natural gas-generated power.

Many Austin residents are still bitter over a series of referendums in the 1970s and 1980s. The rulings granted the city a 16 percent ownership in the south Texas plant that NRG proposes to expand. Although the plant was supposed to cost \$964 million, the final bill was more than six times the estimate (Marty Toohey, [Austin American-Statesman](#), Feb. 1). -- **TS**

CLIMATEWIRE HEADLINES -- Thursday, February 3, 2011

SPOTLIGHT

1. **CLEAN TECHNOLOGY:**
The hazy anatomy of a potential 'game-changer' in automobiles
2. **BUSINESS:**
IBM on the hunt to perfect the lithium-air car battery

TODAY'S STORIES

3. **POLITICS:**
Obama to propose goal for energy efficiency in buildings
4. **PUBLIC OPINION:**
Alternative-energy bill should be top priority for Congress -- poll
5. **NATIONS:**
Many of Calif.'s forests classed as endangered at U.N. event
6. **FORESTS:**
How to spend funds to prevent deforestation and not waste them -- study
7. **MARKETS:**
Barclays predicts scarce offsets, high prices for Calif.'s cap and trade
8. **CALIFORNIA:**
Court ruling could threaten state emissions law
9. **RENEWABLE ENERGY:**
World's energy supply can be completely renewable by 2050, study says
10. **CHINA:**
Nuclear power, high-speed rail top priorities for industrial budget
11. **CARBON MARKETS:**
European trading to slowly reopen after emissions credit theft
12. **NUCLEAR:**
Energy company plays carbon card to promote plant
13. **WIND:**
Wind power installations fell worldwide in 2010

E&ETV'S ONPOINT

14. **UTILITIES:**
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