Alabama Power Reduces Coal Use At 3 Plants

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Alabama Power Co. said Friday it will reduce or end coal use at three generating plants because of federal environmental rules as it spends $1 billion to meet new air emission rules.

The utility said it will close two coal-fired generating units at Plant Gorgas in Walker County northwest of Birmingham. It also will eliminate coal as a fuel and switch to natural gas for fuel at three Plant Barry units near Mobile.

At the Greene County plant west of Tuscaloosa, Alabama Power said it would reduce the workforce by about half as the switch is made from coal to gas.

About 60 jobs will reportedly be affected in Greene County, but the utility said cuts will come from transfers and attrition, not layoffs.

The changes are supposed to be finished by 2016.

In a statement, Alabama Power vice president Matt Bowden said federal rules were forcing the utility to change the way it generate electricity.

"They are putting new restrictions on our ability to provide our customers with the energy they need in a cost-effective manner," he said in a statement.

The announcement came just days after hearings on the Obama administration's plan to reduce carbon emissions as part of its effort to curb global warming, and Republican utility regulators who support the coal industry criticized federal officials for forcing change.

"It's a sad day when Barack Obama and the federal government get to tell the people of Alabama how to handle our own energy production," said Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh, president of the Alabama Public Service Commission.

On the Democratic side, House Minority Leader Craig Ford said he commended the company "for protecting thousands of jobs and looking out for their employees and their families."

Alabama Power said it spent about $3 billion to meet federal environmental rules over the last decade, and it is spending another $1 billion to meet new air emission standards.

Nationwide, the administration plan would force a 30 percent cut in carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by 2030 from 2005 levels.

In Alabama, the government says power plants produced 1,444 pounds of carbon

dioxide per megawatt hour in 2012. The government wants to reduce that amount by about 27 percent by 2030.

Federal officials have not previously attempt to restrict carbon dioxide emissions from existing plants.

Source URL (retrieved on *10/24/2014 - 8:01pm*):
http://www.chem.info/news/2014/08/alabama-power-reduces-coal-use-3-plants