To: Spalding, Curt[Spalding.Curt@epa.gov]
From: EnergyGuardian
Sent: Tue 10/20/2015 11:15:33 AM
Subject: Markey presses NRC on nuclear fleet's climate resilience

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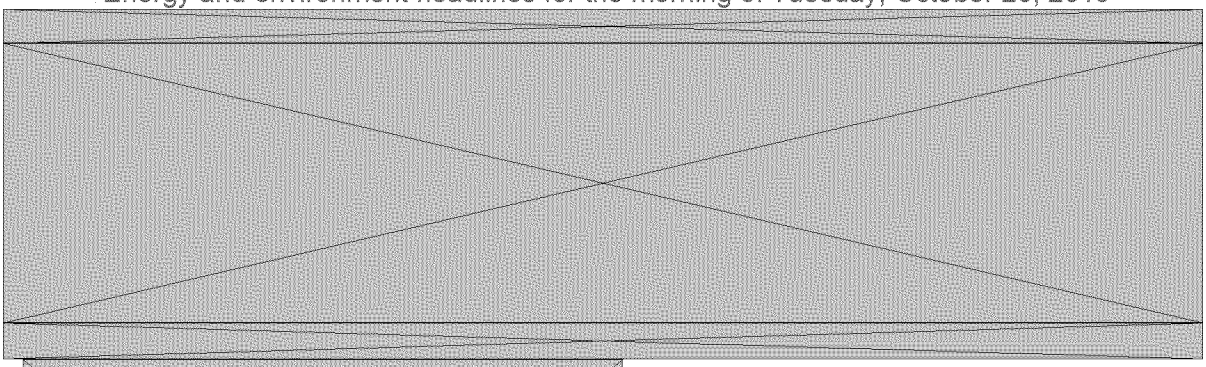
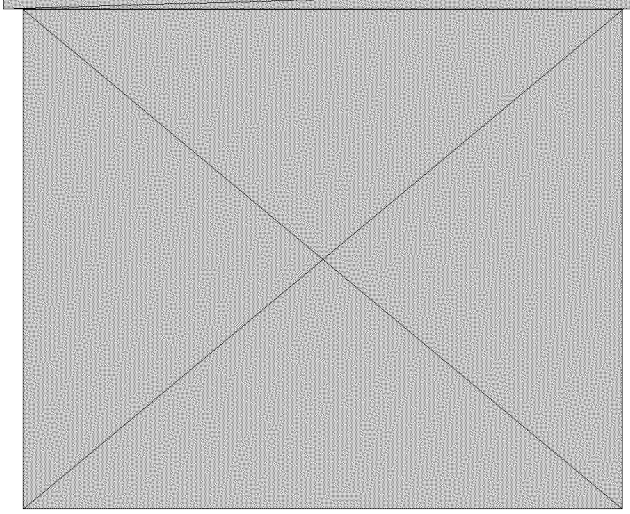
Energy and environment headlines for the morning of Tuesday, October 20, 2015





Markey presses NRC on nuclear fleet's climate resilience

By Kevin Rogers

A week after he welcomed the announcement that his home-state Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station would shut down by 2019, Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey is pressing the federal government to detail the climate resilience of the rest of the nuclear fleet.

In a letter sent Monday to Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Stephen Burns, the Massachusetts Democrat raised concerns that the nation's nuclear plants might be at risk as

climate impacts worsen and extreme weather events become more frequent.

"I write to request information about how extreme weather, higher water temperatures, and the effects of climate change may impact the U.S. nuclear power industry in light of the increase in the number of plant shutdowns," he wrote.

"Other extreme weather events have also threatened the safe operation of U.S. nuclear power plants, including tornado outbreaks, hurricanes, and droughts," he continued.

Markey called on Burns to supply him with data on any nuclear shutdown or power reduction in the past decade that came as a result of flooding, hurricanes and other extreme weather events, as well as how much generating capacity was lost as a result of the shutdowns.

A spokesperson for NRC said that Burns would respond appropriately and offered no additional comment.

Markey also raised concerns that warming water temperatures could force additional plant shutdowns and generation reductions reductions.

"Rising water temperatures, exacerbated by global warming, have also directly impacted nuclear power plants," he said.

Currently, NRC regulations allow nuclear plants to intake water 75 degrees Fahrenheit or lower for cooling operations, with the option to seek permission to bring in water as warm as 80 degrees.

Markey noted that the Pilgrim plant had to shut down four times in the past three years due to warmer-than-legal temperatures in Cape Cod Bay. He warned that the Entergy-owned plant's problems could be emblematic of a larger climate issue facing the nuclear fleet.

"This and past actions at other reactors may signal that plant operators believe that partial or full shutdowns may become regular occurrences," he said. "As the risk of elevated water temperatures continue to rise, so will the risk of nuclear power plant full or partial shutdowns."

Markey believes nuclear energy to be a high-cost, high-risk venture, despite its status as a zero-emitting source of electricity. In response to the announcement that the Pilgrim plant would shut down last week, Markey urged his state to work to replace it with renewable power.

A spokesperson for the Nuclear Energy Institute, the nuclear industry's advocacy group, did not return a request for comment on Markey's letter and concerns. NEI, however, contends that nuclear plants are highly resilient to extreme weather, especially in Markey's region.

"New Englanders are no strangers to extreme weather," NEI President Marvin Fertel said in

response to last week's Pilgrim announcement. "Over the years, with rare exception, nuclear energy facilities have supported the area by reliably providing the electricity that can be the difference between life and death."

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Worker's cancer linked to Fukushima

Upcoming Events

States probe VW over emissions, look for settlement

money

By Ronnie Greene and Ryan J. Foley

WASHINGTON (AP) — An expanding investigation into Volkswagen's emissions-cheating scandal launched by state attorneys general could last years and will likely end in a negotiated settlement.

Forty-five states and D.C. have joined the review, investigating how VW was able to game emissions tests to hide that its "Clean Diesel" cars emitted smog-causing exhaust up to 40 times dirtier than the law allows. The attorneys general are likely to seek compensation for consumers and redress for environmental harm, building their own investigations under state laws that protect consumers from deceptive trade practices and set clean air standards.

"This is a really important case and it has big economic and health consequences. It's nowhere near the scale of tobacco but you are kind of in that realm," said former Wisconsin governor and attorney general Jim Doyle, who participated in the multistate investigation that ended in a landmark settlement against tobacco companies in 1998. "This is the kind of case that you elect an AG for, to stand up for the safety and health of the people of the state."

Volkswagen is "looking at an enormous settlement, just enormous, when you think about how many cars are out there," he said.

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Son of late PM Pierre Trudeau becomes Canada's new leader

By Rob Gillies

TORONTO (AP) — Canadians voted for a sharp change in their government Monday, returning a legendary name for liberals, Trudeau, to the prime minister's office and resoundingly ending Conservative Stephen Harper's near-decade in office.

Justin Trudeau, the son of late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, became Canada's new prime minister after his Liberal Party won a majority of Parliament's 338 seats. Trudeau's Liberals had been favored to win the most seats, but few expected the final margin of victory.

Canada had shifted to the center-right under Harper, who has lowered sales and corporate taxes, avoided climate change legislation and clashed with the Obama administration over the Keystone XL pipeline.

The Trudeau victory will ease tensions with the U.S. Although Trudeau supports the

Keystone pipeline, he argues relations should not hinge on the project. Harper has clashed with the Obama administration over other issues, including the recently reached Iran nuclear deal.

"Tonight Canada is becoming the country it was before," Trudeau said. And he added that positive politics led to his victory.

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Oil slips following big slide

By EnergyGuardian

Oil was lower early Tuesday following a big slide triggered in part by a fall in gasoline futures.

Benchmark U.S. crude for November delivery was down 11 cents to $46.17 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. On Monday, the contract fell $1.44 to $46.28.

Brent crude, used to price international oils, lost 10 cents to $48.50 in London. The December contract had plunged $1.85 to $48.61 in the previous session.

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Monitors arrive after radioactive waste site fire in Nevada

By Sally Ho and Ken Ritter

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Radiation wasn't immediately detected during fly-overs of a burned trench containing long-buried radioactive waste at a commercial disposal site in rural southern Nevada, state and federal officials said Monday.

Ground testing was scheduled next, headed by a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency radiological emergency team sent to the site about 115 miles northwest of Las Vegas, said Rusty Harris-Bishop, spokesman for the EPA Region 9 office in San Francisco.

"No gamma radiation has been detected at this time," Harris-Bishop said in a statement announcing the federal agency was joining a damage and danger assessment headed by the state and involving the Nevada National Guard, Nye County officials and U.S. Energy Department.

The EPA said the unknown amount of low-level radioactive waste that burned had been

deposited sometime in the 30 year-period before 1992, when facility operator US Ecology stopped accepting such material. It was one of six in the nation that accepted low-level radioactive waste, which typically includes tools, protective clothing, and parts and machinery from nuclear plants.

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More workers testify on mine conditions in ex-coal CEO trial

By The Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — In ex-Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship's trial, former mine supervisors testified about being pushed to produce more coal despite poor conditions underground before a deadly 2010 mine explosion.

Media outlets report that in Charleston federal court Monday, former section foreman Richard "Smurf" Hutchens recalled unrealistic coal production goals at Upper Big Branch Mine. He said a supervisor threatened to fire him if he didn't meet production goals, despite regularly being behind on cleaning up his section.

Former superintendent Rick Hodges and fire boss Larry Adams said Upper Big Branch never had enough workers to both produce coal and maintain safety.

Blankenship is charged with conspiring to break mine safety laws and lying to financial regulators about safety at the West Virginia mine, which exploded in 2010, killing 29 men.

A message from the American Petroleum Institute

America is now the world's #1 natural gas producer and will soon be #1 in oil. Now more than ever, abundant energy means abundant prosperity, opportunity and security for all Americans.

Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org

Dalai Lama calls action on climate a 'human responsibility'

By Katy Daigle

NEW DELHI (AP) — The Dalai Lama on Tuesday urged strong global action to limit global warming and to protect fragile environments, including the Himalayan glaciers and Tibetan plateau.

Calling climate change a "problem which human beings created," the 80-year-old Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader said all of humanity was now responsible for taking action. But instead, he said, "we are relying on praying to God or to Buddha. Sometimes I feel this is very illogical."

He issued his plea in a pre-taped video released as part of a campaign launched by the Tibetan government-in-exile in the north Indian hill town of Dharmsala, where the Dalai Lama has been based since fleeing a Chinese military crackdown in Tibet.

The government-in-exile said the campaign would continue through this year's U.N. climate change talks, where nations hope to conclude a new treaty for limiting climate-warming gas emissions. The exiled government will also send its own delegate to the talks, which start Nov. 30 in Paris, though it will not have a vote of its own.

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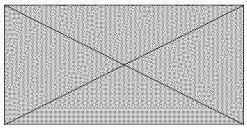

Week in Review – Carbon Dioxide Study Shows Benefits

Kasich Announces Energy Plan.

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Utilities meet efficiency with raised fees

Declining electricity consumption has pushed utilities to increase their customers' monthly fees to pay for fixed costs, including grid maintenance, a practice that's angered consumer advocates, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Oklahoma cracks down on disposal wells in Cushing

Following a number of earthquakes near the major crude storage hub at Cushing, the Oklahoma Corporation Commission has ordered cutbacks in the operation of wastewater disposal wells in the area, The Oklahoman reports.

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Biden outlines his climate record

With a possible move to launch a presidential campaign still up in the air, Vice President Joe

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Biden used a speech at the White House Monday to run down his long record on climate and environment issues, The Hill reports.

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Railroads seek more time to install safety technology

The American Public Transportation Association warns that the hauling of freight cargo – including oil and gasoline – could be stopped in its tracks unless Congress extends the Dec. 31 deadline to install Positive Train Control, FuelFix reports.

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Gasoline glut: Futures at 6-year low

Growing supplies and worries about weaker demand saw gasoline futures slump to a six-year low on the Nymex Monday, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Proposed coal mine expansion in Montana hits snag

The Montana Environmental Information Center has been successful in challenging a 2013 permit allowing expansion at Signal Peak mine, and the matter will now be referred back to the state Department of Environmental Quality for review, Platts reports.

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Faster hydro permitting would aid climate fight: Industry

The National Hydropower Association launched a promotional blitz Monday that argues a permitting process for hydropower projects that can take "up to ten years" isn't acceptable for a government focused on cutting carbon emissions and expanding clean energy, The Hill reports.

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Solar projects encroaching on natural landscapes: Study

A Carnegie study released Monday found that new solar projects in California are being located in natural landscapes instead of developed areas, affecting wildlife habitats and reducing arable land, The San Diego Union-Tribune reports.

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Saudi debt sees govt. holding up on payments

Contractors building infrastructure in Saudi Arabia have been waiting months for payment, sources have told Bloomberg, attributing the delays to a government cash flow problem

triggered by falling crude prices.

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Worker's cancer linked to Fukushima

A former recovery worker at Japan's crippled Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant has been diagnosed with leukemia, the government confirmed after he filed a claim for worker's compensation, The Washington Post reports, noting media claims he was exposed to 16 millisieverts of accumulated radiation.

More

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 20, Washington: The Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy to hold a hearing on December's United Nations climate talks. State Department Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern to testify. 2:45 pm , Dirksen 419.
- Oct. 20, Washington: The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing on six Interior Department and Energy Department nominees, including Cherry Ann Murray, to be Director of the Office of Science at the Department of Energy; Victoria Marie Baecher Wassmer, to be Under Secretary of Energy; Mary Kendall, to be Inspector General at the Department of the Interior; Suzette Kimball, to be Director of the United States Geological Survey; Kristen Joan Sarri, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior (Policy, Management and Budget) ; and John Frances Kotek, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Nuclear Energy). 10:00 am , Dirksen 366.
- Oct. 20, Washington: Secretary of State John Kerry to headline a State Department forum on climate and clean energy investment forum. 9:15 am , State Department.

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