

Report Says Clean Coal Tech Not Present-Day Reality

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A new report compiled in consultation with the White House and a pool of clean-energy experts suggests that clean-coal technology is too embryonic to use as a base for America's new climate change rules for power plants.

The report, released Tuesday, follows the release earlier this month of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed new carbon emissions standards for power plants, which would make it impossible for new coal-fired plants to be built without the implementation of carbon capture and sequestration technology, otherwise known as "clean-coal" tech, which is still in its early days.

If finalized, the new standards will boost the future of natural gas-fueled power plants, which can achieve the new emissions standards more readily, and the new report warns the Obama administration that carbon-capture technology is "only just gaining maturity for power generation."

"We are not saying CCS [carbon capture and sequestration] isn't commercially viable, but it is unproven enough to not bank [greenhouse-gas] targets alone on this target," noted former Colorado governor Bill Ritter (Democrat), who led the report.

Where are we with CCS exactly? It's moving forward, albeit slowly. North America's first two power generating plants to have employed CCS successfully (in Mississippi and Canada) haven't come on line yet, but are expected to do so this year, according to Ritter.

So while there may be an argument that CCS is commercially viable, that hasn't been proven, the report argues, and thus should not serve as a foundation for a new climate change policy.

This latest report also succeeds another study last week that bolstered earlier EPA findings that power plants fueled by natural gas release some 40% less carbon dioxide than coal-fired plants.

According to the new study conducted by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, combined-cycle natural gas power plants, which use a combination of natural gas and recycled exhaust heat, release significantly less greenhouse gases than their coal-fired counterparts.

Last week, the US Department of Energy approved \$1 billion in funding for a carbon capture and sequestration project in Meredosia, Illinois. Dubbed FutureGen 2.0, the project intends to demonstrate the efficacy of capturing greenhouse gas pollution from coal-fired power plants and storing it underground.