

XCEL ENERGY INC. DOESN'T NECESSARILY CONFESS TO SOME OF THESE REALITIES:

Coal for electricity accounts for 33% of the nation's CO₂ emissions[1]. Xcel Energy is said to be the fourth largest single contributor to global climate change, who in 2005 released 70.5 million tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere[2]. Xcel operates seven coal-burning power plants that collectively release more carbon dioxide than any other source in Colorado. Xcel is in the process of constructing a new coal burning power plant near Pueblo, CO. In a town that already houses over half of the state's mercury emissions, the plant will add over 100 pounds of mercury to the environment every year until at least 2060[3]. Coal for energy is not going to be overhauled any time soon.

In a 2004 landmark suit, Xcel was one of five U.S. corporations targeted as the worst offenders toward climate change. For the object of pressuring dramatic CO₂ emission reductions, eight states appealed to the federal common law of public nuisance, claiming that the states had the right to protect their citizens from such widespread harm[4]. In a pending federal law suit, Xcel currently faces more than \$400 million in fines for 13,642 alleged violations of the Clean Air Act. Rocky Mountain Clean Air Action, the group filing the suit, says it gleaned the information from Xcel's utility filings with the state. The group also alleges that the coal-fired Cherokee power plant in North Denver exceeded the limits for opacity levels—the density of the smoke from the smokestacks—more than 500 times in the past five years[5].

Xcel also owns two nuclear power plants, the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant and the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant. Xcel recently announced its launching of a \$100 million expansion plan for the generating capacity at Monticello[6]. The Prairie Island facility rests adjacent to the Prairie Island Indian Community reservation, and is known for its controversial storage of nuclear waste above ground and on-site in large steel casks. The facility is said to release tritium into the Mississippi River, and airborne radioactivity[7]. Xcel pays the Native community around 2.25 million a year. Unfortunately this is no surprise when we remember that most mining and milling of uranium occurs on Native lands.

True stewards of the land and people.

- (1) http://www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu/grocc/documents/Ceres_corp_gov_and_climate_change_sr_0306.pdf
- (2) <http://www.coloradocleanenergy.org/html/factsheets.html>
- (3) http://www.crocodyl.org/wiki/xcel_energy
- (4) <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=11454>
- (5) http://www.denverpost.com/business/ci_8104034
- (6) <http://neinuclearnotes.blogspot.com/2008/07/xcel-energy-plans-for-monticello.htm>
- (7) <http://www.no-nukes.org/prairieisland/piemits.html>

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XCEL WANTS YOU TO THINK THEY ARE SUSTAINABLE

According to their website, Xcel Energy is the number one wind provider in the nation (based on the number of customers participating), and “actively promotes conservation”. Their stated environmental policy is to conduct “all operations in an environmentally responsible manner”. Xcel was recognized on the Dow Jones Sustainability Index for 2007 and 2008, and claims awards from the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the National Hydropower Association, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Let this speak for itself.

Xcel claims that in 2003, they were one of the first utilities in the country to implement a *voluntary* emission reduction program by installing emission controls at three of their power plants in the Denver metro area. Despite the fact that power companies have been required by law to monitor and report CO₂ emissions since 1990[1], issuing data that has resulted in pressure to clean up pollutants. In 2004, Xcel was the main opponent to a renewable energy bill that narrowly passed in a ballot referendum[2]. Known as Amendment 37, the bill required that utilities provide an increasing percentage of electricity from renewables, reaching 10 percent by 2015. In 2007, this was expanded to a state-wide energy renewable standard reaching 20 percent by 2020, that according to Environment Colorado, will reduce emissions by 11 percent[3]. Not much of a reduction, by most standards. So then Xcel should be able to make the legislative grade, right?

Xcel currently maintains a renewable energy portfolio that includes wind, hydro power, waste to energy (refuse-derived fuel) and biomass. Their commitment to renewables remains minuscule in scale when compared to their commitment to coal. In addition to the coal-fired plant under construction at Pueblo, Xcel is planning for a 600 MW integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) plant near Brush, Colorado[4]. This is the trend, across corporate energy providers. Even with the measurable increase in renewable energy, electricity from non-renewable sources will double in the same period. Termed the “coal rush”, a new coal capacity of 145 GW (approximately 290 new 500 MW plants) is expected by 2030[5].

If only “environmentally responsible” didn’t offer such a contentious definition.

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- (2) http://www.crocodyl.org/wiki/xcel_energy
- (3) <http://www.environmentcolorado.org/envco.asp?id2=30943&id3=DO&>
- (4) http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Unnamed_Xcel_Energy_Plant
- (5) <http://www.sierraclub.org/environmentallaw/coal>

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