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Another Win for Dirty Electricity



Electricity markets are making US electricity dirtier and riskier by forcing the early retirement of operating nuclear power plants. This is really bad news for the US electricity system.

In May 2019, Exelon decided to retire the Three Mile Island unit 2 early, despite the plant having NRC approval to operate until April 2034. The Pilgrim nuclear power plant in Massachusetts will close in May 2019, despite the plant having NRC approval to operate until June 2032.



The International Energy Agency (IEA) [Nuclear Power in a Clean Energy System](#) report makes the point that nuclear power is needed to transition to a sustainable, low-carbon electricity system and that all existing nuclear power plants should operate for as long as safely possible.

Closing an operating nuclear power plant will result in higher air emissions because the electricity generated by the retired nuclear power plant output will be replaced by dirty combustion-based electricity.

US operating nuclear plants are retired early because the owners of these plants are losing money selling power at wholesale electricity market prices that are lower than cash generating costs.

US electricity markets focus only on low short-term wholesale electricity market prices. These electricity markets:

- Ignore air emissions and other environmental impacts;
- Ignore long-term electricity system reliability and capacity planning;
- Fail to support clean and reliable nuclear power;
- Allow the replacement of nuclear power by dirty combustion-based power plants; and
- Allow increased, and risky, reliance on a single generation fuel (i.e., natural gas).

Does the US really want electricity markets that are designed to deliver dirty and risky electricity?

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