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## Electricity and Natural Gas Link Up

February 2012

Utilities are always looking ahead to prepare for the future. One of the major issues on the horizon is the increasing convergence of electricity generation and natural gas in the Northwest's energy supply.

While natural gas-fired generating plants have been part of the region's portfolio for decades, a variety of factors is pushing natural gas to the forefront as an even more attractive fuel choice for power generation going forward. Several Northwest utilities are planning over the next decade to build new power plants fueled by gas. Some of these plants will meet growth, while others will replace coal, hydroelectric generation, and resources that will no longer be available.

The growing interdependence between natural gas and electricity has raised a number of issues. Representatives of both industries have joined to explore topics ranging from whether there is adequate gas pipeline capacity into the Northwest to how to coordinate planning between electric utilities and natural gas providers.

A recent conference sponsored by natural gas and electricity trade organizations attracted regional and national participants to Portland, Oregon. The discussions highlighted the importance of these issues and the need to resolve them. Utility officials, system operators, technicians, regulators, policy makers, and business leaders are planning for the years ahead when we will be more dependent on natural gas to fuel the production of electricity in our region.



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