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Renewables, Energy Efficiency and Technology Help Meet Electricity Needs

Utilities in the Pacific Northwest expect a significant increase in the need for electricity in the coming decade. Regional population growth and new technologies that rely on electric power are fueling this growth.

Electric utilities are responsible for providing a reliable power supply at reasonable cost in an environmentally sound way. To meet that responsibility, they plan to diversify their resources with alternative energy sources, intensify conservation and energy efficiency efforts, and explore new technologies.

Traditional generating resources like hydropower and coal, which currently supply 70 percent of our region's electricity, will continue to be a big part of the equation. The use of natural gas, which has been on the rise, will also continue to increase.

Development of wind power already tops the list of the region's renewable resource projects. Other new renewable technologies are being explored, including geothermal, solar, wave energy and biomass.

Renewable resources protect the environment but also present challenges. They pose significant costs and new infrastructure needs, including transmission lines. Some renewable resources, like wind and solar, also require back-up generation that can operate when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining.

Utilities are taking care of keeping the lights on while they augment energy efficiency efforts and investigate new opportunities. Exciting technologies that will allow customers to have a more active role in monitoring and affecting their own electricity use are in the early stages of development. Changes are coming and utilities are paving the way.

Check out the **Plan Today Power Tomorrow** regional energy project,
www.PlanTodayPowerTomorrow.com