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9/26/2011

Federal Regulatory Updates

- ✓ **DOE Releases Plans to Establish Voluntary Efficiency Rating for Commercial Buildings (August 8):** The Department of Energy (DOE) announced plans to establish a voluntary energy efficiency rating system for new and existing commercial buildings in 2012, and is requesting public comment. The rating system, which will be called the National Asset Rating Program, will seek to assess building performance “as built” rather than using utility billing histories or operational records. DOE claims that such ratings will allow for more objective comparisons of buildings that may be operated under different conditions.
- ✓ **EPA and NHTSA Issue Final Efficiency and GHG Standards for Heavy Duty Trucks (August 9):** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) have finalized the first ever coordinated greenhouse gas (GHG) and fuel efficiency standards applicable to new heavy-duty trucks and engines. The standards cover model years 2014 through 2018.
- ✓ **DOE Issues Updated Energy Efficiency Standards for New Federal Buildings (August 10):** DOE has issued a final rule requiring all new and renovated federal buildings to achieve a level of energy efficiency that is at least commensurate with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) 90.1-2007 standard (for commercial buildings) and the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (for residential buildings). Where it is cost-effective on a life-cycle basis to do so, the rule also requires Federal buildings to achieve a level of performance up to 30% higher than these standards.
- ✓ **Department of Energy Launches New Tools to Accelerate Adoption of Electric Vehicles (August 22):** DOE announced two online tools to help communities prepare for plug-in electric vehicles. One is a template for residential charging stations’ local design permits; the other is a training video for inspectors and electricians.
- ✓ **DOE Announces New Refrigerator Efficiency Standards (August 26):** DOE has issued final efficiency standards for home refrigerators and freezers that will improve their efficiency by about 25% by 2014. The standards are the result of a consensus between manufacturers, consumer groups, and environmentalists.
- ✓ **DOE, EPA Release Plans for Regulatory Reform (August 26):** As ordered by Executive Order 13563 DOE and EPA have issued final reports identifying a number of regulations that the agencies will target for modification or elimination. DOE’s plan specifies thirteen regulations, including six relating to appliance and equipment energy efficiency standards. Reporting requirements for the Weatherization Assistance Program and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program will also be reviewed. EPA’s report discusses 35 planned regulatory reviews. The [DOE](#) and [EPA](#) plans are available online.
- ✓ **EPA Takes Three Actions Implementing GHG Reporting Program (August 26):** EPA took actions furthering implementation of its regulations requiring mandatory reporting of GHG emissions. [Launch of Electronic Reporting Tool](#): a web-based application for electronic reporting of GHG emissions data. Entities subject to the reporting rule will be able to use e-GGRT to submit their first GHG reports (due September 30, 2011). [Final Rule Deferring Reporting of Commercially Sensitive Data](#): certain entities will be able to defer reporting some inputs to emission equations until March 31, 2013 or 2015, because they could reveal trade secrets or other confidential information. [Proposed Technical Amendments to Reporting Requirements](#): intended to promote clarity and consistency in the existing requirements rather than mark changes in policy. Comments will be taken on the proposed amendments for sixty days after publication in the *Federal Register*.
- ✓ **Statement by the President on the Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (September 2):** President Obama issued a statement requesting EPA Administrator Jackson to withdraw the draft Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and to have them reconsidered in 2013.

- ✓ **OIG EECBG Management Alert Report (September 2011):** The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has issued a Management Alert on the status of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program. Recommendations in the alert include verifying the reliability of obligations data reported; identifying recipients who have not satisfied their 18-month obligation-of-funds commitment and urging them to take action; and identify those recipients who are unlikely to expend funds within the grant period.

Federal Legislative Updates

- ✓ **House Ready to Fight Europe's ETS (August 28):** The House Transportation Committee filed legislation, H.R. 2594 European Union Emissions Trading Scheme Prohibition Act of 2011, to ban US air carriers from participating in the European Union's emissions trading scheme (EU-ETS), objecting on legal and policy grounds. The program requires all airlines flying in Europe to be liable for greenhouse gas emissions and will take effect in January 2012.
- ✓ **Maryland's Senator Cardin Unveiling Green Construction Jobs Bill During Visit to Frederick (September 19):** Senator Cardin of Maryland will introduce bipartisan legislation that would significantly reduce the depreciation schedule for retrofitting roofs for energy efficiency.

Federal Budget Updates

- ✓ **House Appropriations Bill for EPA and DOI Includes Deep Cuts (August 2011).** Fiscal Year 2012 spending legislation proposed in the House of Representatives for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies includes large budget cuts and restrictions on program funding. The \$27.5 billion bill would block EPA's implementation of GHG stationary and mobile source regulations. An amendment approved on July 27 would cut the funding for EPA's GHG reporting registry in half. The House rejected an amendment that would have cut \$48.2 million from EPA's budget to shrink the Energy Star program. The bill has not been voted on in the House as of September 20.
- ✓ **House State Department Appropriations Bill Removes Funding for International Climate Programs (August 2011).** The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations unanimously approved a 2012 budget for the State Department and foreign aid that would significantly reduce the funding for international climate change programs. The spending bill would cut approximately \$10 million dollars for work with the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This bill has not been approved by the full Appropriations Committee as of September 20.
- ✓ **Senate Appropriations Committee Approves Energy & Water Spending Bill (September 7):** The Senate Appropriations Committee approved their version of the Energy and Water spending bill for fiscal year 2012 (FY 12). The bill would provide \$31.625 billion, almost \$1 billion more than the version passed by the House on July 15, 2011 (H.R. 2354) and more than \$4 billion less than the \$36.5 billion that the Obama Administration requested for these agencies. As passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee, the bill provides \$57 million below FY 11 levels. The funding includes a \$70 million increase for Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), and no change for Energy and Efficiency and Renewable Energy programs. HR 2354, the House version, passed the House by a vote of 219 – 196 on July 15.

State Government Updates

- ✓ **Maryland Legislators to Resume Wind Power Discussions (August 29):** The Maryland Senate Finance Committee will discuss the pros and cons of wind technology. Governor Martin O'Malley introduced a bill sponsored by Finance Committee Chairman Thomas M. Middleton that did not pass in the last legislative session because there was not time to fully digest the implications. Wind-energy supporters are confident that questions can be answered to pass the bill in next year's session.

Local Government Updates

- ✓ **Montgomery County Launches Residential Energy Efficiency Rebate Program (August 25):** The Montgomery County Residential Energy Efficiency Rebate Program will now offer incentives to homeowners for energy efficiency improvements for between \$500 and \$3,000. The program has \$1.1 million available and expects to serve 300 to 500 residents. An energy audit must be performed by an auditor participating in Maryland Home Performance with ENERGY STAR or a utility to be eligible.
- ✓ **Arlington Prepares Energy Labels for Government Buildings (August 30):** Arlington County will start installing labels documenting energy use and carbon consumption in government buildings in October. The labels will show past energy use to document improvements over time.
- ✓ **Potomac River Generating Station to Close by October 2012 (August 30):** The Potomac River Generating Station, a coal-burning power plant operated by GenOn Energy, will be closed by October of 2012 after a new agreement with the City of Alexandria. The closing date may be extended for reliability purposes, but the plant will be taken offline as soon as it is no longer needed.
- ✓ **University of Maryland Unveils New Solar Panels (August 31):** University of Maryland has just installed a 2,632 solar panel installation on one of its buildings. The panels will produce 792-megawatt hours of electricity each year. They were partially funded by a \$630,000 grant from the Maryland Energy Administration with money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, with the remaining funds coming from Washington Gas Energy Services, Inc.

Utilities Updates

- ✓ **Dominion Virginia Power 15-Year Plan Targets Reliable, Cost-Effective Solutions for Growing Energy Needs (September 1):** Dominion Virginia Power plans to meet a nearly 30% increase in demand by 2026 with a mix of generation and additional conservation and load management programs. Closing and conversion of coal plants is likely, maintaining a cost-effective mix of fuels that meet environmental needs. Enabled by new legislation, Dominion will likely request regulatory approval for a program which would lease large commercial rooftops for solar power.
- ✓ **Department of Energy Awards \$43 Million to Spur Offshore Wind Energy (September 8):** Dominion received \$500,000 and a Richmond based company received \$4.1 million from the US Department of Energy to study offshore wind farms. Dominion will analyze a hypothetical project for performance and cost estimates.

Other National and International Updates

- ✓ **The Effects of Renewable or Clean Electricity Standards (A Congressional Budget Office Study) (July 2011):** The Congressional Budget Office released a study examining how federal standards would change the mix of fuels used to generate electricity, the amount of CO₂ emissions, and the retail price of electricity in different parts of the US. The study also highlights key elements in designing a renewable or clean electricity standard.
- ✓ **Read the Label (July 7):** KB Home, a public builder, began making an Energy Performance Guide label standard on every house it builds. They tout the label as the house equivalent of the miles-per-gallon fuel efficiency rating for cars.
- ✓ **ICE to Shutter Chicago Climate Futures Exchange First Quarter of Next Year (August 5):** The Chicago Climate Futures Exchange will close at the end of next year's first quarter due in part to the failure of the US to pass cap-and-trade legislations.
- ✓ **City of Broadening Sidewalks (August 12):** Chicago is developing a Chicago Pedestrian Plan that will establish specific goals on safety, and serve as a tool to improve local streets. A draft version of the plan is expected to be released at the end of the year.
- ✓ **Registration Begins for America's Home Energy Challenge (August 16):** DOE and the National Science Teachers Association announced on August 16 the kick-off of a nationwide student contest to help families save money by saving energy at home. *America's Home Energy Education Challenge* will engage students to help them learn the science of energy and make wise energy choices about energy efficiency. The National Science Teachers Association will run the three month program for third through eighth graders for DOE. Registration begins August 16 and ends October 7, 2011. Participation in the program will be broken into two parts: the Home Energy Challenge and the Energy Fitness Award.
- ✓ **EIA Reports a 3.9% Increase in US Energy-related CO₂ Emissions in 2010 (August 18):** The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports that energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions in the US in 2010 rose 3.9 percent over 2009 levels, their largest absolute and percentage increase since 1988 (when they grew by 4.6 percent). Part of this growth in emissions can be attributed to a rebound in the economy. The summer of 2010 was much warmer than average, leading to increased use of air conditioning (and thus more electric power). In the electric power sector, coal generation grew by 55 percent in 2010.
- ✓ **Avoiding a Train Wreck: Replacing Old Coal Plants with Energy Efficiency (August 22):** The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) released a white paper outlining benefits of using energy efficiency and combined heat and power to replace coal-fired generation that will likely retire due to new regulations.
- ✓ **Coal-fired Plants in Canada Must Use CCS (August 22):** The Canadian government proposed rules that would require coal plants to implement emissions control measures to make them comparable to natural gas fired plants, effectively mandating carbon capture and sequestration. There will be a 60 day comment period on the rules; if approved, the standards would take effect in 2015.
- ✓ **In Seattle, Work Starts on 'Greenest' Office Building (August 29):** Work has started on the Bullitt Center in Seattle, a 10,000 square foot building that will produce its own energy and process all of its own wastewater. The building has a premium price for its rigorous materials requirements but is expected to last 250 years.
- ✓ **LEED 2012: The USGBC Adds Teeth, Real-Time Reporting to its Green Building Ratings (August 31):** LEED 2012 will launch in November and go to US Green Building Council (USGBC) members for a vote next summer. The new version will take advantage of technology and practices that make real-time energy and water

management commercially viable. USGBC is working to make data legible using a database called the Green Building Information Gateway.

- ✓ **RGGI Announces Results of Latest Auction (September 9):** The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) has announced its auction allowance results. Of all CO₂ allowances offered, only 17.75% were sold. This decrease is attributed to a decrease of emissions in the region.
- ✓ **As PV Prices Keep Falling, US Solar Project Pipeline Booms (September 12):** According to a 2010 analysis, the average total installed cost of solar systems in the US fell 20%. The two leading suppliers for non-residential projects are American companies, though production for these companies has largely shifted to Asia. According to recent research, around 73% of the total economic value of a solar system stays in the US.
- ✓ **CARB Releases RFPs for the Cap and Trade Program (September 13):** The California Air Resources Board released four RFPs for public review that will establish the cap and trade program. The RFPs are for an operator to run the auction; a contractor to provide financial services to purchase allowances; an entity to monitor the market; and trainers for the CARB staff on how to monitor allowance markets. A Bidders' Conference was scheduled for September 22, 2011. CARB must finalize the cap-and-trade regulations by October 28, 2011. The regulations are expected to go into effect on January 1, 2012.
- ✓ **SolarCity Project Lights Up (September 13):** DOE has announced a partial loan guarantee of \$344 million to the SolarStrong Project from the SolarCity Corporation. They will install up to 160,000 rooftop solar installations on 124 US military bases, hoping to create approximately 750 construction jobs and 28 full time permanent jobs. The project will help the Department of Defense reach its renewable energy goals.
- ✓ **Washington Redskins Go "Green" With Solar Panels at FedEx (September 15):** The Washington Redskins unveiled a 2MW solar installation, in partnership with NRG Energy. The 8,000 solar panel installation will provide 100% of energy needs on non-games days, and 20% on game days. The project also includes a solar film statue and 10 electric vehicle charging stations. Transparent panels will be installed on part of the stadium's façade.
- ✓ **Lawmakers Want to Question Solyndra Investors About its Collapse (September 19):** Solyndra filed for bankruptcy this month, beginning a controversy because the company had received a \$535 million loan guarantee from DOE in 2009 and was strongly lauded by the Obama administration. Congressional hearings have questioned DOE and are now looking to question private investors. Solyndra executives were scheduled to testify but had to cancel their appearance.

Upcoming Workshops and Events

- ✓ **October 6:** COG Solar Workshop; COG; contact [Jeff King](#) for more information.