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Nuclear Energy Future

Even nuclear energy pros are divided. While none of them doubt either the safety or the reliability of the current plants, they are split as to whether future facilities will figure prominently into this country's generation portfolio.

For years, building up to what had been termed the Nuclear Renaissance; the return of nuclear power seemed inevitable. The fuel form, which is relatively emissions-free, is a bonus for climate advocates while the uranium that is used to feed the reactors is plentiful. And for three-plus decades, the plants had become reliable and efficient, running at 90-plus percent capacity rates -- more than any other form of electric generation. To top it off, no major accidents had occurred here.

Then Fukushima happened. And that caused the world community to pause and to reexamine its nuclear energy options. While those considerations have been ongoing -- nuclear concerns around the world are cooperating in an effort to prevent such a disaster again -- the shale gas phenomenon keeps persisting. Such unconventional natural gas is not just cheap and abundant but it can also be used in combined cycle generators that are efficient and that can get easily permitted.

There are 104 nuclear plants now operating in the United States, which generate a fifth of the nation's electricity. "As someone who loves nuclear, it is a large speculation," says John Rowe, former chief executive of Exelon, "It is 30 years before it breaks even. I think the combination of low natural gas prices and Fukushima will set a real nuclear renaissance back by several decades. Illinois-based Exelon operates 22 nuclear power plants, more than any other U.S. utility. It has used its political clout to get the Obama administration to up the amount of loan guarantees provided to first-of-their-kind nuclear facilities. The amount authorized had been \$18 billion but the White is trying to increase that to \$54 billion.

To that end, Southern Company and its partners are building two new units where two other nuclear reactors now reside. The total price tag is estimated at \$14 billion. Of that, the partnership snagged an \$8 billion loan guarantee. They will put up the \$6 billion balance.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Agency granted a license to the project in February, prompting Southern to say that the units would be operational by 2017. The agency is also considering an application from SCANA Corp. Ken Silverstein-Energy Central

Electricity Pricing Areas - Apr 3, 2012 April

On-Peak	Per kWh
Cinergy	\$.02893
PJM West	\$.03488

ComEd Average Day Ahead LMP Electric Price

Time Period	Average per Kwh
Mar 1- Mar 31,2011	\$.03668
April 1 - April 30	\$.03448
May1- May 31	\$.03954
June 1 - June 30	\$.03851
July 1 thru July 31	\$.05170
Aug 1 - Aug 31	\$.04064
Sep 1 - Sep 30	\$.03058
Oct 1- Oct31	\$.02968
Nov 1- Nov 30	\$.02816
Dec 1 - Dec 31	\$.02971
Jan 1 -Jan 31	\$.03043
Feb 1-Feb 29	\$.02963
Mar 1 thru Mar 31	\$.02894

Weather Today: Some sunshine with rain this afternoon. Warm. High 76F. Winds S at 10 to 15 mph, becoming N and increasing to 20 to 30 mph. **Tonight:** Widely scattered showers or a thunderstorm this evening. Then partly cloudy. Low 46F. Winds NNE at 20 to 30 mph. Chance of rain 30%. **Wed:** Plentiful sunshine. High 54F. Winds NE at 15 to 25 mph. **Thu:** Plenty of sun. Highs in the upper 40s and lows in the upper 30s. **Fri:** Plenty of sun. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the low 40s. **Sat:** Mix of sun and clouds. Highs in the upper 60s and lows in the low 50s.

