

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **New Study Commissioned by CPS Shows Energy Efficiency is Better Alternative to New Coal Plant**

SAN ANTONIO – Citizens gathered in San Antonio today to raise concerns as to whether or not the new coal plant proposed in the area is necessary. The citizen groups, county commissioner, and local architect released statistics from a study commissioned by City Public Service showing that energy efficiency can meet the city’s needs.

“A CPS-sponsored study by KEMA, Inc. demonstrates that a new coal plant proposed for San Antonio is unnecessary at this time because conservation measures could save more energy than the proposed coal plant will generate. The CPS-KEMA study demonstrates that while the new plant would provide 750 megawatts of electricity, the amount of energy saved from efficiency measures could be 1,220 megawatts. Bexar County has established a similar efficiency program. Efficiency is not only pure, clean energy, in this instance, it is nearly twice the energy expected from a new and very expensive coal plant,” said Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson. “As just one example of what can be done in the area of conservation, Bexar County has embarked on a preliminary energy conservation program. For starters, we adopted our first-ever Energy Plan. Then, with just seven projects in only two of its many buildings, we project that the net savings from these energy efficiency projects will be \$196,884 annually. This will be a cumulative total savings of more than \$1 million over a ten-year period. And we’ve only just begun! Just think of what would happen if the government, private sector and our citizens would follow suit! Pursuing energy efficiency is the logical place to start providing more energy and saving ratepayers’ money.”

The first part of the study, commissioned by City Public Service (CPS), San Antonio’s city-owned utility, as part of its energy planning process, has taken almost a year to complete. It was released today by a coalition opposing the plant. The coalition includes Smart Growth San Antonio, the Sierra Club’s Alamo Area Chapter, the Jefferson Heights Neighborhood Association, Public Citizen and the SEED Coalition, as well as over 70 concerned residents who live near the proposed plant. The groups released the report in advance of a public meeting on the proposed plant’s air permit, scheduled to be held by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality at 7 p.m. on Dec. 16 in the East Central High School cafeteria at 7173 FM 1628 in San Antonio.

“This study shows that the proposed coal plant isn’t needed. It would be far cheaper to meet the city’s increasing demand for power by using that energy more efficiently. If we have a billion dollars to spend on construction of that plant and \$100 million a year to spend on fuel for the plant, wouldn’t we be better off spending that money here in San Antonio?” asked Marianne Kestenbaum of Smart Growth San Antonio. “That would be an average of \$2,000 per home that we could invest to save energy in every home and apartment in San Antonio. Not only will efficiency measures save money, but they also would put people in San Antonio to work.”

The proposed coal plant, which would be built southeast of the city, will cost San Antonio residents approximately \$1 billion. Energy efficiency measures on the other hand cost around 1/3 that of a new

power plant or \$330 million in this case.<sup>1</sup> If approved, the coal plant is expected to be up and running by 2009.

“Other cities such as Sacramento, California and Austin, have been able to avoid building new power plants by using energy efficiency,” said Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office. “Energy efficiency is the most cost-effective way to meet the city’s growing energy needs. We know it can work, and in the time frame needed.”

For instance, Austin avoided building a new coal-fired power plant by saving more than 500 megawatts of energy over the past 20 years through energy efficiency programs, according to Austin city records. And the average Austin homeowner has saved an average of \$200 per year in energy costs after an energy retrofit.

The city could save 953 megawatts by 2014 on the residential side alone. CPS could do this by helping homeowners to install high performance windows, tune-up or replace their air conditioners, more effectively vent attics and install programmable thermostats and through other programs. Homeowners, if given incentives through building codes, also could save energy by installing more efficient lights, appliances and water heaters, according to Stephen Colley, a local architect and coalition member who specializes in designing energy efficient buildings. Similarly, commercial building managers could save an estimated 249 megawatts by 2014 by undertaking these and other measures, such as using high-efficiency chillers and HVAC controls, Colley said.

“There are plenty of other smart things that the city could do to save energy,” said Colley. “The solutions are ready available, and many other governments, cities and utilities are taking advantage of them.”

For instance, the city could amend its building code to:

- Require all new buildings to meet green building standards or use efficient appliances;
- Require reflective roofing to deflect heat;

In addition, CPS could loan citizens money to buy highly efficient air conditioners, and CPS could lease renewable energy systems for homes and businesses without any added cost to the customer during the term of the lease or loan program and encourage businesses to add small but very efficient power plants called combined heating and power plants to new commercial buildings and use the waste heat for other purposes, such as operating central air conditioning systems and heating water.

CPS provides a fifth of the city’s annual operating budget for police and fire protection, street improvements, parks and other services. CPS may balk at efficiency measures because those could cost the utility money. But CPS can make money from efficiency, too, and do it with a quicker return on investment than by building a billion-dollar coal plant, Smith said.

The next phases of the study will provide estimates of economic development benefits of energy efficiency and environmental impacts. These segments of the study are expected to be completed in the next six months.

The coalition is calling on the CPS board to delay the permit hearing until they next stages of the study are complete. The new power plant would emit more than six million tons of global warming gases and more than 140 pounds of brain-damaging mercury annually, and threaten air quality plans. The groups urge San Antonio residents to attend the Dec. 16 public meeting and ask the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and city leaders to “just say no to coal.”

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<sup>1</sup> As estimated by Public Citizen.