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CLEAN COGEN POWER – GOOD FOR THE STATE OF THE STATE

As Governor Schwarzenegger looks for ways to meet his goals of cleaning California's air and greening California's energy production – one place to look is “in house” at a clean, green energy source that's on line right now – cogeneration.

“Cogeneration,” explained Audrie Krause, spokesperson for CogenWorks, a coalition representing cogenerators in California, “uses one fuel, usually natural gas, to produce two types of energy, usually electricity and steam. It's efficient and environmentally-sound energy, and Californians rely on this energy today and every day.

“But we want the Governor to know that we're at risk of losing that green power. In fact, California is at risk twice. First, cogeneration already represents 17 percent of the state's power. Second, that cogenerated power reduces greenhouse gases and smog – in an amount equal to taking more than 5 million cars off the road.”

(more)

Existing cogeneration facilities could be shutting down, because current contracts with the state's private utilities for this power are expiring, and there is no policy in place to ensure these contracts are renewed at reasonable rates. The California Energy Commission reported last year: "These projects could shut down in the near future as their contracts expire. It is estimated as much as 2,000 MW [megawatts] could shut down between now and 2010...."

"The Governor can help keep that existing cogenerated power online, and even expand this clean electricity," said Krause, "by supporting recommendations from the California Energy Commission that are now before the state Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Those recommendations call for the PUC to establish annual targets for cogenerated power, standardize a fair and open contracting process, and require greater transparency when it comes to utility pricing and costs to ensure contracts are renewed at reasonable rates."

Cogenerated power is considered environmentally-friendly because it's basically recycled energy. It usually starts with natural gas for fuel, and natural gas is one of the cleaner energy sources. Then from that one fuel source, cogeneration produces two power products – usually steam, used by the industrial operation or school or hospital and electricity, which is put back into the state's power grid.

CogenWorks represents a coalition of cogenerators, including cities, hospitals, universities, refineries, food processors and a variety of other businesses and industries. There are more than 770 cogenerators in California producing 9000 megawatts, which represents 17 percent of the state's electrical power.