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11/09/1984 - Coal Conversion Proces Unerway

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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

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L/A

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's coal conversion project is underway and the tentative completion date target is late fall 1986, according to Marty Ignazito, engineer at the University's Physical Plant.

The \$8.5 million operation will be funded by both state and Federal money and will switch the heating and cooling systems from natural gas. The basic project is to reactivate three coal-fired boilers and modify two existing gas-fired boilers to burn both oil and gas.

"Coal is about one-third the price of gas per BTU at the combustion chamber," Ignazito said, "and the net cost of operations will be decidedly lower."

Backup oil will be stored in three 40,000-gallon tanks underground on University property across Seventh Street from the power plant. When the installation is completed, the surface area will be covered with asphalt and used as a parking lot.

The U.S. Department of Energy awarded Eastern a \$1.5 million grant under Cycle V of the Department's Institutional Conservation Program, which will supplement the state's share of the overall costs. The conversion project was initiated by Gov. James Thompson about four years ago when he placed Eastern on a list of public institutions to return to the Use of coal as a steam-generating heat source.

Existing bunkers in the power plant will be used to store about a five to six-day supply of coal. That reserve duration can vary, Ignazito said, depending on the severity of cold weather and/or peak

cooling demands in the summer. Deliveries of coal will be made each working day or as needed.

Both Ignazito and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) believe emission control measures are "state of the art" and will exceed all state and Federal standards for removing sulphur dioxide or particulate matter as the coal is burned.

A building approximately 65 feet tall will house bag filters (they work like filters in a vacuum sweeper) to eliminate particulate (minute and separate particles). The baghouse will be located between the power plant and the Student Services Building.

Another structure approximately 40 feet high in the same area will house part of the flue gas desulfurization (FGDS) equipment. A platform around the baghouse will support an "economizer," an efficiency improvement step in the exhaust gas purification system.

The lower flue gas discharge temperatures resulting from the economizer are required for proper baghouse operation.

The route travelled by the exhaust gases from burning coal is from the boiler to the economizer, to the baghouse, to the FGDS (Scrubber). The result is a clean stream of gases. The FGDS process will add water vapor to the flue gas, resulting in a plume, discharged into the atmosphere from a 150-foot stack. This plume, Ignazito said, is often mistaken for smoke, but is actually only harmless water droplets.

Problems of noise pollution have also been attacked. All heavy fans involved in the operation will be enclosed on the platform in the interest of noise abatement. Ignazito also said coal suppliers can be required to treat coal so that it will be relatively dust free when delivered. Storage and handling facilities will be dust tight or equipped with dust abatement measures.

An addition has been built at the Physical Plant Building to house a maintenance operation previously located in the power plant. The move became necessary when renovation work started at the plant.