



## Dirty plant going clean

### Air-pollution equipment dedicated at Dominion Virginia Power location

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By GREG EDWARDS

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

[VIDEO: The air scrubber](#)

Virginia's dirtiest power plant is well on its way to cleaning up its act.

Dominion Virginia Power dedicated a major piece of pollution-control equipment yesterday at its Chesterfield Power Station.

The equipment, called a scrubber, will remove 95 percent of the sulfur dioxide -- about 37,000 tons a year -- from the smokestack of the coal-burning plant's largest generating unit. Sulfur dioxide combines with nitrogen oxides to form acid rain, which can aggravate heart and lung diseases.

The scrubber also will remove 90 percent of the toxic mercury, which can harm animals.

The addition of the equipment, which is in full operation, will bring Dominion Virginia Power's investments in air-pollution control at the plant to \$650 million by year's end, said Bob McKinley, the utility's vice president for power-plant construction.

"I've been waiting for this day for a long time," said L. Preston Bryant Jr., Virginia's secretary of natural resources. He was on hand to help Dominion Virginia Power dedicate the scrubber.

Bryant recalled how Dominion Virginia Power -- while other utilities mounted court challenges -- was the first to work out a settlement with the federal government and New York state nearly eight years ago to make \$1.2 billion in environmental improvements at its power plants. At the time, U.S. officials and New York had accused several utilities with increasing the output of their power plants without installing pollution controls required by law.

The utility said yesterday that between the late 1990s and 2015, it will have spent \$2.6 billion on environmental improvements at power plants serving Virginia. Dominion Virginia Power is the state's largest utility, serving 2.2 million customers.

The Chesterfield County plant produces 1,700 megawatts of electricity, or enough to serve 425,000 homes. The scrubber, which is between the boiler and the smokestack, will use roughly 15 megawatts, plant manager Ricky Elder said.

The plant's largest unit, No. 6, generates 650 megawatts, or roughly 38 percent, of the facility's output. It is also equipped with fabric filters in a "bag house" to capture dust and with equipment to remove ozone-causing nitrogen oxides.

The scrubber will use water and roughly \$2 million worth of pulverized limestone each year to capture sulfur-dioxide from the plant's emissions. A byproduct of the scrubbing process is calcium-sulfate, or gypsum. The utility plans to transport 260,000 tons of gypsum by barge each year to a U.S. Gypsum plant in Norfolk, where it will be made into drywall.

The scrubber should reduce emissions of sulfur-dioxide from 39,616 tons -- the amount Unit No. 6 produced last year -- to less than 2,000 tons annually. Annual mercury emissions should be cut from 201 pounds to 20 pounds.

The power plant also has two natural-gas burning generating units and three other coal units. The coal units will be fitted with a single scrubber to accommodate all their emissions, the company said.

The Chesterfield plant, which is annually ranked among the top two air polluters in the state, should fall well down the list once all environmental improvements are completed, said utility spokesman Jim Norvelle.

The utility plans to add 30 workers to the plant's work force of 250 to operate the scrubber, Elder said. Contact Greg Edwards at (804) 649-6390 or [gedwards@timesdispatch.com](mailto:gedwards@timesdispatch.com).

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[webmaster@inrich.com](mailto:webmaster@inrich.com)

