



The District of Columbia – U.S. EPA’s #1 Green Power Community

Frequently Asked Questions

Green Power

Q. What is green power?

A. Green power is generated from renewable resources such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, biogas, and low-impact hydropower.

Q. What makes it greener than other power?

A. Green power resources produce electricity with an environmental profile superior to conventional power technologies, and produce significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions and little or no air pollution—helping to protect human health and the environment.

Q. How is green power purchasing helping our community?

A. Purchasing green power improves air quality in our region and our city, reduces our reliance on fossil fuels, and helps support growth of clean energy businesses and jobs. Greater demand for green power also helps drive down the price of green power, making it more affordable and available for others.

The collective green power purchased by District government, businesses, organizations and residents is equivalent to taking 102,000 cars off the road for a year; not burning 60 million gallons of gasoline; removing 65,000 homes from the electricity grid for a year; or growing 14 million tree seedlings for 10 years. District green power customers are using the equivalent of the power produced by nearly 250 large wind turbines for a year.

Q. What are the health benefits of using green power?

A. Using green power reduces the burning of fossil fuels and the amount of air pollutants emitted from conventional power plants. These air pollutants are damaging to human and environmental health in a variety of ways.

Mercury emissions from burning coal pollute bodies of water and contaminate fish and shellfish that people eat. Exposure to mercury can impair neurological development in children, and reduced immune function, weight loss, and reduced reproduction rate in adults. Sulfur dioxide is another by-product of burning coal and can aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Sensitive populations include asthmatics, individuals with bronchitis or emphysema, children, and the elderly. Sulfur dioxide is also a primary contributor to acid rain. Emissions of nitrogen oxides contribute to the formation of smog and can have negative health consequences.

Q. Where is green power available?

A. Green power is available to every electricity user in the District of Columbia and surrounding areas. Some of the green power sold in the District comes from regional wind generation. Consumers may also choose to purchase from green power sources located in the national electricity grid.

Q. How can a District resident or business sign up to purchase green power?

A. Signing up is easy and quick and can be done on-line or over the phone by contacting a green power supplier. EPA offers a Green Power Locator that identifies local retail electricity suppliers and renewable energy certificate marketers that provide green power products. Visit www.epa.gov/greenpower/pubs/gplocator.htm for more information.

Buyers can learn more about purchasing green power options by downloading the EPA's Guide to Purchasing Green Power from the EPA Green Power Partnership website. The guide helps explain the buying process as well as the benefits of each product option.

Q. Will green power cost more?

A. The cost of green power varies depending on the supplier, the percentage of green power purchased, market conditions, and other terms. Depending on these factors, the price may be higher, the same, or even lower than traditional electricity rates. Customers should review available options to find what best meets their needs and budget.

EPA's Green Power Communities and the Green Power Community Challenge

Q. What is a Green Power Community?

A. Green Power Communities are towns, villages, cities, counties, or tribal governments where the local government, businesses, and residents together, as a community, buy green power in amounts that meet or exceed EPA's Green Power Community purchase requirements. For cities and towns similar in size to the District of Columbia, Green Power Communities must meet or exceed a three percent benchmark.

Q. Why is this announcement important?

A. The District of Columbia is an early leader in the Green Power Community program. The District is one of the two largest cities in the United States to become a Green Power Community (Portland, Oregon is the other) and the District, as a community, is buying a more green power than any other community in the EPA program.

Q. What is the District's Green Power Community ranking?

A. As of March 9, 2011, the District’s total voluntary green power purchases by government, business, and residents are just over **8 percent** of the District’s total electricity load (756 million kWh/year out of a total District-wide residential, commercial and institutional electricity consumption of 9.1 billion kWh/year).

This makes the District the **largest EPA Green Power Community** in the United States as ranked by total green power kWh/year. The District has the tenth-highest green power percentage of total energy use of any Green Power Community.

Q. What role is the District Government playing?

A. The District Government is purchasing 50 percent green power to operate District schools, offices, streetlights, and other operations (244 million kWh/year); which ranks as the third-highest purchase by a municipality. The District Government buys wind power from [Washington Gas Energy Services, Inc.](#), one of several competitive retail suppliers of wind power.

Q. What is the Green Power Community Challenge?

A. The Green Power Community Challenge is a national, year-long campaign by EPA to encourage communities coast-to-coast to use and promote renewable energy and fight climate change. Through this national campaign, the District will compete with other communities for honors as: 1) the community that uses the most green power; and 2) the community that achieves the highest green power percentage of total electricity use. The winners will be announced in September 2011.

Q. What is the goal of the EPA Green Power Community Challenge?

A. EPA has challenged Green Power Communities to purchase more than 1.8 billion kilowatt-hours of green power annually, doubling the collective amount of green power used by these communities. EPA and the Green Power Communities are working together to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and expand the nation’s renewable energy supply by driving demand for green power among other communities.

The District Green Power Challenge

Q. What is the District Green Power Challenge?

A. Today, the District and our current Green Power Partners are kicking off a city-wide green power challenge campaign to everyone in the city. The first milestone in the challenge is to **increase green power purchases citywide by 33% by August 31, 2011** to help the District maintain its EPA rank as America’s #1 Green Power Community. A 33% increase would mean that District electricity users are purchasing a full **10% from green power—more than 1 Billion kWh annually.**

Q. Why should our community take the Challenge?

A. Like most municipalities, the District’s electricity usage is the single-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and a significant source of local and regional air pollution. By using green power and taking the Green Power Community Challenge, the District residents, businesses, and institutions can help clean the environment, improve public health, reduce our carbon footprint, demonstrate civic leadership, increase citizen pride, and enhance our community image as a national green

By answering this new call to action, any electricity customer in the District can help increase our lead as the nation's #1 Green Power Community. Supporting green power also helps move our nation to a clean energy future and inspire other communities to do the same.

Q. How can I support the District Green Power Challenge?

A. Whether you are a resident or business, supporting the District Green Power Challenge is easy. Join the hundreds of District residents, businesses and institutions who have already made the switch. Visit www.ddoe.dc.gov or www.epa.gov/greenpower to learn where you can sign up to purchase green power through an energy supplier. It's as easy as switching long-distance telephone providers, and there will be no change in service delivery or energy reliability.

EPA's Green Power Partnership

Q. What is the Green Power Partnership?

A. EPA's Green Power Partnership is a voluntary program that encourages organizations to buy green power as a way to reduce the environmental impacts associated with electricity use. Since 2001, the Partnership has grown to more than 1,300 partners who voluntarily purchase nearly 18 billion kilowatt-hours of green power annually. Partners include a wide variety of leading organizations such as [Fortune 500®](#) companies, small and medium sized businesses, [local](#), [state](#), tribal, and [federal](#) governments, and [colleges and universities](#).

Q. Who are the EPA Green Power Partners in the District?

A. The District Government and 71 other organizations are already members of EPA's Green Power Partnership. Partners include universities, law firms, restaurants, hotels, non-profits, schools, embassies, and the Federal Government, among others.

Q. How do you become an EPA Green Power Partner?

A. Organizations can find out more about becoming a Green Power Partner by visiting the EPA's Green Power Partnership website. Signing up requires a commitment to use green power and just a few easy steps: 1) estimate your annual electricity use; 2) review the EPA's purchase requirements; 3) choose a supplier and purchase green power; 4) complete a partnership agreement; and 5) send in your information to the EPA.