

European power plants boosting coal use

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High oil and natural gas prices, coupled with increased demand, are driving Europe's return to coal-fired power plants, an industry official says.

Enel's, Italy's largest electricity producer, is converting one of its biggest power plants from oil to coal, despite environmental concerns. The New York Times reported European countries are expected to add 50 coal-fired plants over the next five years.

Gianfilippo Mancini, Enel's chief of generation and energy management, said the power plant in Civitavecchia, Italy, "will be the cleanest coal plant in Europe." Mancini said the company wants to prove coal can be "sustainable and environmentally friendly."

"In order to get over oil, which is getting more and more expensive, our plan is to convert all oil plants to coal using clean-coal technologies," Mancini said.

While power companies say they are doing to their best to make the new coal plants as clean as possible, critics say the term "clean coal" is an oxymoron. "Given our knowledge about what needs to be done to stabilize climate, this plan is like barging into a war without having a plan for how it should be conducted, even though information is available," NASA climatologist James E. Hansen told the Times.

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